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PRESENTED BY THOMAS WELTON STANFORD

MATTHIAS

AND

HIS IMPOSTURES:

OR, THE

PROGRESS OF FANATICISM,

ILLUSTRATED IN THE EXTRAORDINARY CASE

OF

ROBERT MATTHEWS,

AND SOME OF HIS FORERUNNERS AND DISCIPLES.

"It ill comports with the majesty of truth, or the character of God, to believe that he has built the noblest superstructure on the weakest foundation; or reduced mankind to the miserable alternative either of remaining destitute of the knowledge of himself, or of deriving it from the source of impious imposture."—*Robert Hall.*

BY WILLIAM L. STONE.

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PREFACE.

It was not until the last week in the recent month of April, that the idea of the present work was suggested. In conversation with a distinguished clerical friend, upon the subject of Matthias and his impostures, particularly in regard to the respectability of the people whom he had succeeded in leading so widely astray, the writer mentioned the fact, that, after all, the pretended prophet was but a circumstance, as it were, in a series of delusions originating in fanaticism twelve or thirteen years since, which, in their progress, had been marked at different periods, by transactions and absurdities scarcely less censurable, or extraordinary, than the gross impieties of the arch-impostor himself. With a great number of facts in relation to the matters referred to, the writer had become acquainted as they transpired; and in the belief that he could possess himself of all others essential to a continuous history of one of

the most singular and extraordinary delusions that have ever appeared, and flourished for so great a length of time, among an intelligent Christian people, he suggested the idea of collecting the particulars, and publishing them in a little volume. "Do it by all means, if you can obtain the facts," was, in substance, the reply. Before, however, the work was seriously undertaken, the writer mentioned the project to a number of clerical, and other religious friends, by every one of whom he was urged to proceed. The materials were mostly collected early in the month of May—since which period the work itself has been written, at intervals of time, and amidst the calls of a daily occupation, which is as endless as the circle.

At the time when the composition of the work was commenced, and even after the first sheet had been stereotyped, the writer was not certain of obtaining access to the private prayers, meditations, and other manuscripts, of the late Elijah Pierson; nor did he then anticipate so full and interesting a narrative of the connection of Mr. and Mrs. Folger with Matthews and Pierson, as he has since been so fortunate as to obtain; although from the first, he was promised assistance from that quarter. The papers of Mr. Pierson are alike curious, remarkable, and interesting; and the narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Folger, which

has been incorporated in the work entire, forms one of the strangest chapters in the history of the human mind, that have ever been written. It also raises the veil which has hitherto concealed from the public eye, the proceedings of Matthews and his disciples in the "Mount Zion" of Singsing, and gives a full account of the internal police of that establishment. The writer has likewise succeeded in obtaining a larger number of facts and anecdotes respecting the impostor, and authentic details of interviews and conversations with him, than he at first expected; so that the work has grown in the process of its preparation, to upward of a hundred pages more than was originally intended. Still, it is believed the reader will not be wearied in the perusal. Much available matter has been omitted, and nothing has been retained which was not deemed essential to the object and design of the work. It is often necessary, for the cause of truth, to expose opinions, which, in themselves, are so monstrous as not to merit a moment's consideration.

Unless the writer is greatly deceived, these pages will be found to comprise a history that is perfectly unique—a delusion *sui generis*—whether arising from individual fanaticism, or enthusiasm, or madness; or combined, or individual imposture. It has been contended by some mental philoso-

phers, that "men do not so much believe in any error as in truth, and that there is no error in which there is not some share, however small, of truth." But this proposition will not stand for a moment, against the errors disclosed in the following pages, made up as they are of the pure and unmixed elements of falsehood. This fact, then, for such it must be esteemed, overthrows entirely the theory of Victor Cousin, who says, in commenting upon Locke's chapter on the causes of error, that he "shall never cease to repeat, that there is no total error in an intelligent and rational being. Men of genius, and ordinary men, unquestionably give in to many errors, and attach themselves to them; but not that to which makes them errors, but to the part of truth which is in them." And again, "It is the truth, joined to the error, which gives to the error all its force, which gives it birth, sustains it, spreads it, explains and excuses it." The writer apprehends, however, that it would puzzle M. Cousin, and even Leibnitz himself, whom the distinguished Psychologist recognizes as the greatest of modern authorities, to find the slightest admixture of truth, in the system imposed upon his followers by Robert Matthews.

The writer's design was to render the work a simple record, or narrative, of facts, without aiming at the embellishments of learning, or of rhetoric, or

the indulgence of theoretical or philosophical speculation. In the execution of his design, it has been his study to spare the feelings, and avoid giving the names, of individuals, as far as could be done with propriety, or the obligations to truth would allow. And he has throughout endeavoured to act in strict obedience to the law of kindness—exercising, withal, the same measure of charity which he would himself desire to be meted to him in return, under the like circumstances. Indeed, in this latter respect, he may be charged by some, with having gone too far. It may possibly be urged, that in a land like ours, no man can, innocently, receive any thing which grossly contradicts divine revelation. The Scriptures, on leading and fundamental truths, are so plain that he who runs may read: and it may therefore be contended, that he who, with his Bible in his hand, receives such a being as Matthews in the character of God the Father, has a heavy account to settle at God's bar. It is readily granted, that to hold up individuals who had blindly embraced such a monstrous heresy, while of sound mind, as subjects of pity and compassion merely, and without awarding to them a very heavy degree of censure, would be reflecting upon God, diminishing the sense of man's responsibility, and dishonouring the blessed revelation of the Most High. But the severity of cen-

sure must be visited only in proportion to the soundness of the mind of the victim, and the extent to which reason is dethroned by the delusion.

With these preliminary remarks, the work is committed to the public. The writer sincerely hopes it may be of some service to the cause of evangelical truth, if in no other way, by guarding Christian professors against the indulgence of a self-righteous and fanatical spirit, and also against the dangers of enthusiasm. If, through ignorance, or mistaken views of truth or from any other cause, he has said aught amiss, he begs that it may be forgotten and forgiven.

New-York, June 12, 1835.

MATTHIAS

AND

HIS IMPOSTURES.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary Remarks—Early Life of Matthews—Comes to New-York, and acquires a Trade—Returns to the Country, and commences Merchant—Marries in New-York—Becomes a Bankrupt—Returns to his old Employment in New-York—Again retires to the Country—Removes to Albany—Religious Excitement—Becomes an ultra Temperance Advocate—Grows fanatical—Disturbs Public Worship—Flies from Albany in the Night with three of his Children—Excitement and Alarm—Strange Conduct—Arrest—Street-preaching in Albany—Changes his Name—Mission to the West and South—Advent in New-York.

"I HAVE always observed, that when people become better than the Bible, they are very apt to be wrong." Such, recently, was the remark of one of the ablest and wisest of American divines, in reference to the ultraism of the day, in matters of philanthropy and religion, more especially in regard to the professions and practices of those who have been designated as "new-measure men," in the production and conduct of religious revivals. It was an observation full of wisdom. Nothing can be more dan-

Baal and other deceivers, from the days of Moses till the destruction of Jerusalem.—"*The prophets prophesy falsely; the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so,*" was the testimony of Jeremiah. So likewise under the Christian dispensation, from the defection of Simon Magus to the wild delirium of Edward Irving, there have been a succession of Antichrists, until their name is legion—pretenders to Divine missions, the power of working miracles, the gift of tongues—perverting the Scriptures, "leading astray silly women," and men too,—destroying the peace of families, throwing communities into confusion, and firebrands into the Church,—clouding the understandings and blinding the moral perceptions of men, and subverting the faith of those, even, whose mountains stood strong, and who had been counted among the chosen people of God.

Doubtless there have been instances in which the impostors have themselves been partially deranged —in which intense application, or much learning, may have made them mad—possessing, however, enough of method in their madness, like Edward Irving, to involve others in the same hallucinations with themselves. In other cases, as with the Puritans, and the persecutions for witchcraft in the early days of New-England, the actors have been impelled by strong but mistaken views of duty—verily believing that they were doing God service. But in a vast majority of instances, as with the recreant convert of Philip, the instruments of imposture have been full of all subtlety and mischief—children of

the fallen Son of the Morning. "*In the last days,*" says the Apostle Peter, "*there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*"—"*chiefly them which walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; sporting themselves in their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; for when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.*" And again the Apostle Jude admonishes us "*to remember that they were foretold as mockers, who should be in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the spirit.*"

It is wonderful to observe with what precision these prophecies have been fulfilled by the clouds of impostors who have appeared—"spoken great swollen words of vanity," and fallen—since the inspired sentences were uttered. And it may be regarded as one of the evidences of the truth of inspiration, that had the long array of apostates and deceivers actually stood before the sacred penmen at the time of their writing, their characters all naked before them, the likenesses, from the first Christian apostate to the sensual Mormons, could not have been drawn with greater fidelity. Whether among the number, and though last not least may b

ranked the principal subject of the following pages, will be left for the reader to determine after their perusal.

Robert Matthews—for that is the real name of the subject of this history—is a native of Washington county, in the State of New-York, and of Scotch extraction. He is about forty-five years of age, and of respectable parentage, though a mental eccentricity has characterized several members of the family. He was left an orphan at a tender age, and was brought up in the family of a respectable farmer in the town of Cambridge, in the county already mentioned, belonging to the church of the Anti-burgher branch of Seceders. It is related of him, that when the clergyman visited the family on a certain occasion, to catechise the children, he became much pleased with Matthews, then about seven years of age. As the good man departed, he laid his hand on the head of Robert, and gave him his blessing. From that moment the lad said he always expected to become a distinguished personage.

At the age of about twenty years, Matthews came to the city of New-York, and worked at the business of a carpenter and house-joiner, which he had partially learned in the country, and in which occupation he became a first-rate workman. He had always a fine mechanical genius, as had also two of his brothers, at least; one of whom resided in Rochester a few years since, where he died; and the other, who, self-instructed, had become a por-

trait painter of some excellence, also died within a few years, in the western part of New-York, insane.

From the excellence of his work, he had full employment in those branches requiring the greatest skill. The consequence was, that in the course of a few years he accumulated money enough to enable him to return to Cambridge, and commence business as a country merchant. He was considered a very respectable man, made a profession of religion in connection with the Scotch Presbyterian church, and continued for some years without doing any thing to excite suspicion as to the soundness of his head or heart. He was considered, indeed, as ranking rather above the average cast of men in his neighbourhood; and although naturally somewhat vain of his own parts, and not a little elated by his success, and the good opinions entertained of him, yet his conduct was unexceptionable, and he courted and enjoyed the society of those who were above the sphere in which he had recently moved. If extravagant in his habits at this time, it was only in the article of dress, of which he was always vain.

He was married in the year 1813, in the city of New-York (while on a visit for the purchase of goods), to a young lady, the daughter of a respectable Scotch mechanic, who had formerly resided in Washington county, where his daughter was born. Returning to Cambridge, he continued business as a merchant three or four years longer, and was still considered a very respectable man, maintaining

his standing in the church as a regular worshipper and a consistent Christian. About a year after the close of the war, say in 1816, he commenced building a large edifice for a store, but became unfortunate in his pecuniary affairs, and failed before its completion—involving in his ruin an aged and honest mechanic, who, by industry and frugality, had secured a competency for his family. Some hard things were said of Matthews in relation to these transactions; but, perhaps, without any greater or more aggravated cause than is to be found in most cases of similar misfortune.

Being thus broken up in his mercantile business, he returned to New-York with his family, and resumed his former handicraft as a house-joiner. He remained in the city four or five years, but was not satisfied with such employment, and resolved once more to try his fortunes in his native county; for which purpose he removed to the town of Argyle, where he followed the occupation of a millwright. Not succeeding to his wishes, however, he removed to Albany in 1827 or '28, and resumed the joiner's business as a journeyman, taking good care of his family, and attending constantly upon the public services in the sanctuary—attaching himself to the congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. Ludlow. The reason of his leaving the Scotch Church, to which he had previously belonged, was understood to be some personal difficulty with his minister in Washington county, resulting in a settled dislike to that denomination. He very soon ap-

peared to take an increasing interest in religious matters; attended church and social prayer meetings, and conversed frequently upon the subject. Some time subsequent to this period, the late Dr. Chester being absent for his health, notice was given that a young clergyman from New-York, the Rev. Mr. Kirk, was to occupy the pulpit on a certain evening. Matthews went to hear him, and on his return home appeared to be in a state of great excitement, declaring that he had never heard any thing like preaching before, and sat up the greater part of the night repeating, expounding, and commending passages from the sermon. His enthusiasm was so great that Mrs. Matthews remarked to her daughter in the course of the night, "If your father goes to hear this man preach any more, he will go wild or crazy." He did go again to hear him a number of times—was always exceedingly pleased, and became more and more excited. Still he behaved rationally enough until one evening when he went to hear Mr. Finney. The services were continued until a late hour, and Matthews came home in a state bordering upon phrensy.

It was not long before a church was formed for Mr. Kirk in Albany, to which Matthews made application for admission; stating that he was already a member of a church in Washington county. Inquiries were made into his character by the session; but on sending to Cambridge, a letter, or certificate, from the church to which he had formerly belonged was withheld. At that time, as the writer is informed by a gentleman who was then an officer of that

church, he exhibited no symptoms of eccentricity, or of a disorganized mind.

At about the same time, Matthews engaged actively in the temperance reform, in which he laboured with all his might; but he was ultra in his notions, —contending that the use of meats should be excluded, as well as of strong drinks.

A brother of Mrs. Matthews, now a respectable tradesman in New-York, who had resided some years with his sister soon after her marriage, made him a visit just at this crisis. He was kindly received by Matthews, and observed no alteration in his manners, except that he soon introduced religion as a subject of conversation, which was contrary to his former habits; for although, as we have seen, a professor of religion, yet he had never in former years shown himself forward or ostentatious in these matters, but was, on the contrary, rather reserved. He now inquired of his brother-in-law whether he yet remained in connection with the Scotch church, and being answered in the affirmative, replied, "Why, I wonder at that: you are all wrong: I used to think that church was right, too; but I find that although I have been a professor these twenty years, I never had any religion until now—never until I heard the preaching of Mr. Kirk and Mr. Finney."

As he continued his religious conversation, he gradually became excited, and in the end somewhat vehement,—especially on the subject of temperance —strenuously maintaining that intemperance was the great evil at the root of the matter, and that the world could all be converted, if men would only live

up to pure temperance principles. Already had he introduced a rigid system of temperance dietetics in his own household—not allowing the use of meats, and keeping his family upon bread, fruits, and vegetables. It was then the season of blackberries, and these, with bread and vegetables, constituted the sole diet during this visit of his relative—who left him in a frame of enthusiasm bordering upon fanaticism. Indeed, there were moments when, from the wildness of his eye, the brother-in-law began to tremble for his reason, as also did the relatives in New-York on hearing of his proceedings.

During the year 1829, his conduct became more and more wild and unregulated. His employment was still that of a journeyman house-joiner; but instead of minding his work, he fell into the practice of exhorting the workmen during the hours of labour, and of expounding the Scriptures to them in a novel and enthusiastic manner, until at length he became so boisterous, that his employer, a very pious man, was obliged to discharge him from his service. He claimed at this time to have received by revelation some new light upon the subject of experimental religion, but did not as yet lay claim to the Messiahship, or to any supernatural power. Being thus discharged from regular employment, however, he had abundant leisure for street-preaching, which he commenced in a vociferous manner,—exhorting every one he met upon the subjects of temperance and religion, and holding forth to crowds at the corners of the streets. Having made a convert of one of his fellow-workmen, they procured a larg-

white flag, on which was inscribed, "Rally round the Standard of Truth;" this they raised on a pole, and bore through the streets every morning, haranguing the multitudes whom their strange appearance and demeanour attracted. A young student of divinity, catching the infection, as it seemed, united himself with Matthews, and with him visited the abodes of profligacy, intemperance, and vice, on the Sabbath days, preaching repentance to their inmates. But he was yet of sound mind, apparently, if he chose so to appear. The venerable Dr. Proudfit informs the writer, that during this year he fell in with Matthews at a meeting of the Young Men's Bible Society of Albany, and that he conducted himself in a manner perfectly unexceptionable. He introduced himself with an agreeable address, and appeared very devout, and much engaged in the cause.

In his street-preaching, consisting for the most part of more incoherent harangues than are often uttered by men in any condition of mind, his declared object was the conversion of the whole city of Albany,—a work which he had been commissioned to undertake. In the spring of 1830, finding that the city would not be converted, he declared to his wife that it would be destroyed, and he thereupon began to proclaim the impending destruction of the Albanians and their capital publicly.

It was about this time that, coming home one night, he sat down before a table to shave himself, with an open Bible before him, in which he read while preparing the soap for the operation. All of a sudden he exclaimed, "I have found it—I have

found a text which proves that no man who shaves his beard can be a true Christian;" and thereupon declared that he would go to the installation of Dr. Wilson (that having been his intention when he sat down to shave) with his beard untouched. His wife remonstrated, but to no purpose; and he went, unshaved, to attend the ceremony. While it was in progress he continued quiet, until near the close, when he stood up and requested from the congregation leave to ascend the pulpit and address them. Being well known, the permission was given, but, to the great astonishment of his hearers, he burst forth in wild ravings, denouncing vengeance against the people and the land; and, claiming authority from God, announced to the people, that the end of the Gentiles was come—that he was commanded to take possession of the world in the name of the King of kings—that all nations and institutions established on any other foundation than the law of God were henceforth dissolved—and that the law of God was from that date the only rule of government for the world. He attempted to continue his harangue, but before he had time to finish it, or to proclaim the full purport of his commission, the lights were extinguished, and the people dispersed.

Like the Jewish prophet of evil to the city of Jerusalem, during the siege by Vespasian, Matthews continued his denunciations of wo against the city for several days—frequently urging his wife to fly with him from the approaching destruction. Finally, about the middle of June, soon after midnight, he aroused his wife and her five children from their

slumbers, and told them they must fly with him to the hills, as the city would be destroyed the next day. Not being able to persuade the former into his belief, he then declared his purpose of escaping himself, with his children, leaving the mother to destruction. The eldest daughter, however, being of age sufficient to discover the wildness and absurdity of her father's conduct, refused to accompany him; the mother clung to the infant; while the semi-lunatic or impostor took with him his three little boys —the eldest six, and the youngest but two years of age—and departed in the dead of night.

The mother at first thought but little of the occurrence, having seen his vagaries so frequently of late, and presuming that by morning light they would all be safely at home again. But morning came, and the day passed, and they did not return. He seemed indeed to have left the city, nor could any trace of him be discovered. Her anxiety now became intense, as also was that of the citizens to whom she communicated the circumstances. An alarm was given, and the people turned out in great numbers to search for the wanderers. It was seriously apprehended that the father might have put them to death and destroyed himself. The unhappy mother's distress increased with every succeeding hour; the press sounded the alarm; and the mayor issued a proclamation, announcing the facts, and offering a reward for the return of the children.

But a few days elapsed, however, before tidings were received that the fugitives were all safely housed in the town of Argyle, Washington county.

Matthews had a sister living in Argyle, a distance of forty miles from Albany; and it subsequently appeared that the cruel parent had travelled the whole distance, regardless of the tender years of his children, without stopping—going the whole way on foot—and arriving at the house of his sister shortly after midnight, and in twenty-four hours from the time of his departure from Albany. Under any other circumstances, the children would have sunk midway from fatigue; but the terror in which they were kept by their father seemed to invest them with supernatural strength.

Arousing his sister and her family from their sleep, he greatly terrified them by his conduct. They had heard nothing of his strange proceedings; and his incoherent ravings, coming thus suddenly upon them, and at such a gloomy hour, were appalling. He declared that he had fled with his children from Albany, which was to be destroyed on the day of his flight, and he supposed that his wife and the remaining children, who, like the sons and daughters of Lot, had refused to escape, were destroyed also. His sister admitted them with fear and trembling, not doubting that he was raving mad. Having partaken of some refreshments, notwithstanding his fatigue, and the still greater weariness of his children,—sinking from exhaustion,—he would not allow them to be taken to bed, or to leave his side, until after the performance of his evening devotions. He then pulled a Bible from his bosom, and after reading a chapter, and singing a hymn, in which his children were compelled to join,

thus closed this first day of his wanderings as a prophet.

The next day, being the Christian Sabbath, Matthews repaired to the old church in Argyle, entered during the service, and, walking midway up the aisle, while the minister was yet preaching, broke forth into one of his vociferous exhortations. He declared that on the preceding day, judgment had been pronounced at Stillwater, on all kingdoms, nations, and institutions not founded on the law of God. He denounced the congregation there present, as sitting in darkness, and warned them to repent; and proceeded to finish what he called his declaration. He was of course seized and taken out of the church for thus disturbing the public worship; and on the receipt of the tidings of his flight from Albany, was carried back to his family.

Here again his conduct continued equally strange as before. Having now suffered his beard to grow for many weeks, it began to look formidable. He continued to traverse the streets, in grotesque attire, and to utter his violent declamations, and harangue such crowds as he could collect around him. Repeatedly was he arrested for disturbances of the peace by his performances, and was sometimes confined on suspicion of lunacy; but, crazy or not, he was always discharged on examination, as of sound mind. He next disposed of his working tools, and urged his wife to relinquish labour and follow him. She remonstrated; but he persisted; and in reply to her inquiries how she and her children were to be provided for, he said they must live by faith—that

the Almighty would provide for them—and that if they had no other supplies, food enough might be found among the roots and herbs of the woods. It was their duty to go upon a mission for the conversion of the world, and their wants would all be supplied.

Mrs. Matthews had of course too much sense to listen to these vagaries of fanaticism, and refused to go. He for a time yet continued his street-preaching, urging to repentance, temperance, and abstinence from meats, and growing daily more and more loud and boisterous, and more savage in his looks. He denounced all who refused to follow his doctrines, though his ravings were so disjointed and heterogeneous that nobody could understand them, and vented curses upon those who scoffed and derided him. He read his Bible much, particularly the Old Testament, and poured forth quotations in the greatest profusion, but without method, fitness, or adaptation—rendering its sublimest passages but a confused and incoherent jumble of words, and odds and ends of sentences; and yet there was often a shrewdness in some of his own sayings, particularly in reply to questions, or in an occasional repartee, which raised a laugh, and convinced his miscellaneous auditors that he was less of a fool than a knave. But from the wild screams and piercing exclamations which he indulged in his incomprehensible orations, he became a nuisance of which the people had great cause of complaint.

It was now that he assumed the name of Matthias, and gave out that he was a Jew. He then

departed upon his mission for the conversion of the world, taking a western course, for the purpose of visiting his brother in Rochester, and everywhere attracting attention, from the length of his beard and the novelty of his behaviour. This brother, as has already been remarked, was a rare mechanic—inventive and curious. Before his death, he had obtained between thirty and forty patents for as many different mechanical discoveries. The itinerant preacher soon quarrelled with his brother, however, and his stay in Rochester was but a fortnight; and it was then, and from thence, that he commenced his first grand apostolic tour. While in the anti-masonic region of New-York, he declaimed against free-masonry, as against what he considered other abominations of the land. Directing his face towards the setting sun, he traversed the Western States, through the deep forests, and over the prairies, until he had proclaimed his mission amid the wilds of the Arkansas. From thence he turned his steps to the south-east—recrossed the Father of Rivers, traversed the States of Mississippi and Tennessee, and penetrated the Cherokee country, in Georgia, and commenced preaching to the Indians. Here he was seized by the authorities of Georgia, and imprisoned;—but he was an overmatch for them. They knew not what to make of his conduct, or what to do with him. His appearance was eccentric; his kindling eye flashed with fury as he poured forth his maledictions upon them; and they were at length constrained to unbar the prison-doors, and bid him depart. From thence he bent his footsteps

to the North, and passing through Washington, came to the city of New-York. He immediately visited the brother-in-law heretofore mentioned, and was at first very mild and agreeable in his manners and conversation, though of course forbidding in his aspect, since his temporal affairs did not then enable him to array himself in broadcloth and gold, and fine linen, and his beard presented a most unchristian appearance. On being asked why he had assumed such a disguise—why he had abandoned his family, and conducted himself so strangely, he soon became greatly excited, grew furious, and uttered a shower of bitter curses. Foaming with rage, his eyes kindled with passion, and he denounced his relative as a devil, with great violence—declaring that he had burnt his fingers by coming into the devil's house. He thereupon departed in a towering passion.

Little is known with certainty either of his proceedings or his tenets and pretensions at this period. He remained for some time in the city of New-York, exhibiting himself frequently in various parts of the city, grotesquely but meanly clad, and sometimes mounted upon an old and half-starved horse—wandering from place to place—preaching whenever he could find listeners—and attracting little attention, except from the younger members of the population, who used to gather round him with wondering eyes, and an evident disposition to make themselves merry at his expense, which was kept within bounds by his fierce looks, and his apparent activity and strength of body. As yet his

proceedings were seldom, if ever, mentioned in the public prints, and although some curiosity existed respecting him, it was confined to a narrow circle of observers. By one of these the writer has been favoured with the following memorandum, containing the most explicit account of the man's pretensions at this epoch which he has been able to obtain.

"I should think it was about three years ago, that I was acquainted with a lodger in the same house with Matthias, near the Battery. My friend was desirous that I should have a conversation with the prophet, as they called him, and managed that an interview should take place at the tea-table. I treated him with great respect, and used no small degree of delicacy in my questions; this deference seemed to win his confidence, and he gave me something of his creed. I followed up my inquiries in a second interview, but found that he had in some measure changed his ground; but taking all that he said together, as far as such incongruities could be put together, it was this:—That from time to time God had sent his messenger on earth to enlighten mankind, from Moses to Jesus Christ, and from him to Matthias himself. Of his own nature he spoke freely: he acknowledged that he belonged to the human race, but had been set apart as a chosen vessel to be filled with inspiration of a lesser or greater degree, as the Father directed his services; and that sometimes he was ordered to speak in the first person. He did not appear to have a very extensive knowledge of the Bible in

general; his recollection of the prophecies was good. He was particularly fond of quoting from Isaiah, and more than insinuated that the prophecies concerning the Messiah, which he quoted, were said of him and his mission. He seemed vain of his person, and quite charmed with his beard. On my pushing a few questions a little closer on my next visit, he became quite cautious of committing himself, and I found it would be useless for me to spend any more time on him and his creed. I thought him to be more of a knave than a fool; but still, I believe, at that time, he was a dupe to his own fraud, as the actor made himself crazy by so often repeating the character of the madman."

Thus much, of Matthews himself, must suffice for the present: before his further progress can be intelligibly developed, it is necessary to take up a different chain of events, and show how perfectly and strangely withal the way had been prepared for his reception by others, who knew nothing of him, and of whom, at that time, he had never heard.

CHAPTER II.

Antecedent Events in New-York—Mrs. * * *, the Leader of a Fanatical Sect in that City—Female Dress—Singular Domestic Missionary Scheme of certain Ladies—Effect of Fanaticism upon Parental Affection—Organization of the Holy Club—Claims to Miraculous Gifts—Anointing and healing the Sick—Notice of the early Life and Religious Course of Mr. and Mrs. Folger—The Retrenchment Society—A rich Anchorite.

"BEHOLD how great a matter a little fire kindleth," says the Apostle James, in reference, particularly, to the great strifes often engendered by a little misuse of the tongue. The axiom, however, may be applied in various ways, and it is thought will not be inapplicable to the case immediately in hand.

About the year 1821–22, Mrs. * * *, a lady who had but a short time previous been admitted a member, on profession, of one of the Presbyterian churches in the lower part of the city of New-York, began to manifest a spirit of unwelcome censoriousness towards other members of the same church. She was the daughter of a clergyman, long retired from the pulpit, however, but a devout and holy man—of a most lovely disposition—unostentatious in his manners and pretensions—full of charity and good works—and in all respects one of the most amiable and interesting men with whom it has been

the happiness of the writer to be acquainted. The daughter was of a gay and cheerful disposition; and, on making a profession of religion, was esteemed as one who would adorn the Christian character by contributing to its loveliness and good report. But she soon became gloomy and ascetic, and assumed a severity of aspect and conversation which occasioned not a little surprise. These indications were presently followed by a spirit of fanaticism, which was manifested in various ways. She first directed her attention to what she considered the gayety and extravagance of female dress, and denounced the plumes upon the hat of a lady who had been a professor before her, and indeed had affectionately invited her attention to religious subjects before she had herself turned her thoughts in that direction. She next visited her pastor, and demanded a reformation in the wardrobes of the ladies of his household. Gaining over two or three other ladies to her views, further efforts were made by them in the same line of reform; and so much began to be said upon the subject, that the clergyman referred to preached a sermon upon female dress—which was published—and being a judicious and very able performance, has ever since been well received by the Christian public.

The lady, with a small coterie of proselytes, then conceived the project of a speedy conversion of the whole city by a system of female visitation; in execution of which, every house and family was to be visited by committees of two, who were to enter houses indiscriminately, and pray for their conver-

sion, whether the inmates would hear or not. They were encouraged in this wild scheme of religious knight-errantry by the appearance among us, just at that time, of an itinerant clergyman by the name of T—u—r, a gentleman of great zeal, who maintained no inconsiderable degree of popularity among the ultra religionists of New-York for some eighteen months, or two years. By the exertions of the ladies referred to, and his own, a large meeting of females was collected, and he addressed them at great length—urging upon all female professors the duty of immediate organization and action for these visitations—quoting the examples of Tryphena and Tryphosa, with as much confidence as though they were in point—and succeeding in the end, so far as to obtain a number of volunteers to go forth upon this novel system of domestic missions. And here it is proper to state, that it was distinctly understood by these well-intentioned but misguided ladies, that every dwelling-house was to be visited, not excepting even the public hotels, which, like private houses, were indiscriminately to be entered and prayed in and for. The writer well remembers conversing at the time with several ladies who were engaged in the enterprise, and remonstrating with them against so wild and ill-judged a measure. Nevertheless, strange as it may seem, the work was commenced, and the eminent clergyman who had delivered the finished discourse already spoken of, upon female apparel, was among the first to receive a visit from the lady who was at the bottom of the whole enterprise, with an associate; and before he

could recover from his surprise, these missionaries were praying for his own conversion, within his own domicil. The first visit of another of these committees was made to the family of a very pious and devout missionary, then recently returned from his station in the East Indies for his health. This work, we believe, was speedily brought to a close, and the evangelist who took such an active part in its commencement has done so little honour to his profession in subsequent years, as to attract the notice, and receive the discipline, of the church.

In the mean while, and for a considerable time afterward, the lady-principal of the concern not only caused much trouble to her own church by the extravagance of her conduct, but rendered her friends and relatives around her unhappy. Her venerable and excellent father was grieved to the heart at her course, which he could not restrain; and for attempting to do so, was only denounced as having no religion himself. Her husband, moreover, rendered miserable by her course, and supposing that her fanaticism had been induced by her clergyman, became highly exasperated against him.

In the year 1823, or early in 1824, and while these proceedings were yet enacting, the good old gentleman was called to his rest; and the lady whose plumes had given offence to his daughter penned a tribute to his memory in the shape of a biographical obituary notice of some length, which was published. In that notice, she had spoken of the deceased, whom she dearly loved, as a Christian; and, strange as it may appear, by so doing

she again provoked the daughter, who now declared that the writer of an article pronouncing her father a Christian could be no Christian herself. Indeed, a spirit of severity and bitterness—of censure and denunciation—towards all professing Christians who did not walk agreeably to their standard, was now indulged, not only by the lady superior, but by her disciples, which was very unlike the virtue of Christian charity so eloquently commended by Paul, in his first address to the Corinthians: and with the claim of superior sanctity was united an affectation of plainness of attire, in the assumption of which there was obviously more of spiritual pride than accompanied the richest dress in the city. One of the coterie, a lady of wealth, having divested her cap of its lace, actually called upon her pastor, to know whether he had observed her humility! She and her associates seemed to have forgotten another injunction of the great Apostle,—"*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.*"

But it may be inquired, What possible connection can these details, concerning different persons, and at a comparatively distant period of time, have with Matthews the impostor? The connection, it is conceived, will be obvious long before this narrative of human weakness and imperfection will be ended. We are illustrating the progress of fanaticism and delusion; in doing which, the most natural, as well as philosophical, method is, to ascertain the cause, and trace it to its effect. The narrative is therefore resumed.

The next stage of the delusion under review was still more extraordinary. It was the spontaneous formation, in the year 1825, of an association, composed of members of the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist churches—the greater number from the latter, although among those from the former was the moving spirit of the proceedings already detailed in the present chapter. It was not confined, however, as before, principally to "the female brethren" of the churches, but several gentlemen of standing and reputed piety were of the number—some of whom became the leaders of the association. The objects of the association were social prayer, mutual exhortations, and familiar expositions of the Scriptures; and it was alleged that they came out from among their respective churches because of their comparative lack of piety. They arrogated to themselves more holiness than was possessed by others, and therefore consorted thus together, holding their meetings alternately at the houses of the respective members, of whom, at one time, they numbered from thirty to forty. Nor were they drawn from the lowest and most ignorant walks of life, like the followers of Joanna Southcote and the miserable Mormons, but were for the most part well-informed and highly respectable persons, of both sexes, among whom were several professional gentlemen of celebrity. Of their doings and their creed, the following facts have been noted down from the lips of those who were cognizant of their proceedings.

They began with exclusive pretensions to holiness, and proceeded step by step, as fanaticism al-

ways does, until they claimed extraordinary gifts in the interpretation of prophecy—professed to have found the key to the hitherto sealed book of the Apocalypse—and even laid claim to the power of working miracles through the prayer of faith.

Their meetings were usually opened by Mr. ——, one of their leaders, who proclaimed that it was an assemblage in the exercises of which all were allowed to participate, but none must speak unless specially moved thereto by the Holy Ghost. It was also sometimes stated that questions were open for discussion; but did any one, not being full in their faith, venture to doubt, question, or oppose them, the leader would reply, and sometimes abuse them with great harshness. Their preaching was called prophesying. They believed in dreams and visions, and related them for comment and interpretation.

They did not believe in the special observance of the Christian Sabbath, but maintained that all days were alike. They did not believe in the institution of marriage, but maintained that a single life was essential to purity and holiness, and that married people could not really serve the Lord. Some of them went so far as to maintain that all marriage-bonds were dissolved. One very respectable lady, whose husband belonged to the association, and who had herself become partially infected by the mania, was restored to her right mind in a rather singular manner. Two or three of the unmarried sisterhood paid her a visit one day, and almost broke her heart, by informing her that her husband was not her husband—at least, that he would not be her husband

any longer. This bold invasion of her conjugal rights dissipated the delusion which had begun to steal over her.

It happened, however, in process of time, that two of their most zealous leaders, who inveighed the most strongly against matrimony, actually married members of the association. On one occasion, one of them, after speaking very decidedly against marriage—although he himself had once been married—was seen to give his arm to a young lady, on leaving the meeting, and escort her home. A complaint was made against him at the next meeting, and he was brought to the confessional—and obtained forgiveness, if not absolution, by an apology. He nevertheless married the woman afterward.

They did not believe in a final day of judgment, but maintained that mankind were judged for their deeds every day. At one of these meetings, when this tenet was the subject of their devotional meditations, a lady-orator became apparently almost frantic. She screamed wildly—for both sexes "prophesied," and their meetings were sometimes very noisy—and danced back and forth across the room, declaring, "This is the judgment-seat of Christ—the Judge is now on the throne, and he is judging every one of you *now*."

They were also Perfectionists. On one occasion, one of the perfect ladies proclaimed that she was even then standing on the sea of glass, and holding converse with God. She declared that she held sweet communion with him daily—conversing with him, "face to face." At another meeting, one

of the male members declared that he had not had a single temptation for ten years—dwelling much upon his own perfection, the strength of his faith, &c. At the next convocation, however, he was observed to sit silent and moody in the back part of the room. Towards the close of the evening, he rose, and with a heavy heart announced that he had on that very evening been grievously tempted. From the moment he entered the apartment, he said, he had wished them all to fall down and worship him. It was indeed a sore temptation; he wept, confessed his fault, and obtained relief.

They also believed in their power, through the prayer of faith, to heal the sick, as by miracle; and in several cases, one of their leaders, Mr. ——, proceeded to anoint the bodies of the sick, in obedience, as they supposed, to the injunction of the Apostle James; forgetting, or not knowing, that that injunction was prescribed only for observance during the Apostolic age. The facts and circumstances attending one of these cases are well known to the writer, and are withal so peculiar, that the particulars will be briefly stated—especially as they serve forcibly to illustrate the strength with which the delusion had already fastened upon the minds of the members. Among the number, a friend of the writer, and a very excellent man, who is no doubt—his error to the contrary notwithstanding—now rejoicing in the kingdom of heaven, was for a long time sick, and apparently nigh unto death. While thus prostrate upon his bed, receiving the affectionate attentions of his wife, Mr. —— one day told the

latter that the Lord had promised to raise her husband from his sickness, in answer to *his* prayers. He added, that if she would promise him to serve the Lord with her whole heart all the days of her life, and join with him in prayer, it should be done, and her husband should be restored to health. The lady replied that she would make no promises to man upon such a subject—that it was to her God she went with her cares, and to him alone—adding, in answer to his importunities, like a woman of good sense, as she is, the question, "If, as you say, the Lord has *promised* this great work in answer to *your* prayers, what difference can it make whether I comply with your request or not?" Mr. —— then left her, and informed the sick man that it was owing to his wife's obstinacy that he was not healed. The poor man, debilitated in body and in mind, by long and severe illness, believed the suggestion; and calling his wife to his bedside, with tears in his eyes, conjured her not to be so hard-hearted and cruel, as thus to persist in preventing his recovery! At length, however, the difficulty was surmounted. By a small meeting of the leaders of the sect around his bed, he was anointed with oil, with solemn religious services. The disease soon afterward took a favourable turn, and the sick man was eventually restored to comfortable, though never again to robust, health. His recovery was proclaimed as a miracle, and for a long time, to the knowledge of the writer, believed to be one by the invalid himself. It happened, however, that immediately after the anointing, Mr. —— declared that he alone must act as

nurse and physician. The first medicine he administered was a quantity of eggs and cider, which operated as a powerful emetic, and doubtless gave a favourable turn to the disorder. Another case of miracle, performed in the same way, was also proclaimed some time afterward; but this was only completed by the active treatment of a skilful physician, who informs the writer that he was called in just in season, through Providence, to rescue the patient from the grave. Still it is very possible that temporary relief was in both cases attributable to the influence of a strong imagination, impressed with the assurance of recovery. Such was undoubtedly the fact in regard to the pretended miracles contended for by Mr. Hume, as having been performed at the tomb of Thomas à Becket, and elsewhere. Those said to have been performed in Europe some years since, when the French were running wild on the subject of animal magnetism, were occasioned by the operation of the same principle. So, also, in the case of the young lady, Miss Campbell, said to have been miraculously healed by Edward Irving; to which may be added, the pretended miracles of Prince Hohenlohe. Indeed, hundreds and thousands of instances might be cited, in which diseases, probably in themselves in a great measure imaginary, have been alleviated or dispelled by working upon the imagination. But at the same time, equally well attested cases might be cited, in which diseases, and even death, have been superinduced by the same means.

Such was the association of enthusiasts and fa-

natics formed in 1825. By what name it was recognised in its own circle, or whether it had any particular title, is not known to the writer. By the profane, it was sometimes called "*The Holy Club.*" It did not, however, continue long. Its extravagances became such, that its most respectable members fell off, and it was at length entirely dissolved. Its male leaders married, and have since been indulging in the dreams, and reveries, and visionary speculations of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Preserving, as far as possible, the regular order of events, without losing sight, as we must not, of the active and almost omnipresent female spirit who was first in the delusion, and the means of bringing and keeping others therein, the reader must now be introduced to Mr. and Mrs. BENJAMIN H. FOLGER, whose names have so frequently appeared before the public of late, in connection with those of Matthews and his other victims. Mr. Folger has been known to the writer from the days of his boyhood, when both were residents of Hudson. He was one of the most amiable and intelligent lads of his time, and grew up to man's estate, full of activity and enterprise, and endowed with those estimable qualities which, united to an excellent capacity for business, and sound principles of integrity, secured for him the esteem and confidence of all who knew him. He commenced business in the city of New-York about the year 1821, and with the qualifications and advantages just described, his commercial career was not only successful, but prosperous to a degree. He was married in 1823, to a young lady who was

reared in the bosom of the Reformed Dutch church, accustomed from her childhood to the observance of the Sabbath and the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and taught to cultivate religious impressions, and cherish a devotional spirit, by a pious mother.

At the time of their marriage, neither Mr. Folger nor his wife was a professor of religion. Among the relatives present on the happy occasion was Mrs. * * *,—the lady to whom such frequent reference has already been made, and who, as the *master*-spirit of most of the proceedings to be recorded, must yet be spoken of still more frequently. Having previously, however, been the cause of great pain in the circle of her relatives and friends, by reason of her religious enthusiasm, or fanaticism, as it was more justly called, at Mr. Folger's suggestion there was a distinct understanding that her peculiar views upon this subject were never to be introduced into his family. Under this compact, she continued a frequent visiter at the house of Mr. Folger, and obtained great influence over the mind of his lady, for which purpose her efforts were unceasing. In the year 1825, while sitting under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Dubois, Mrs. Folger became a hopeful convert to Christianity, and a member of his church. Her religious experience had been such as to render her feelings peculiarly tender and susceptible. The cares of her mother, at that interesting period, deprived the daughter of her judicious counsel and example; and while thus circumstanced, before her friends had discerned the approach of error, it was discovered that Mrs. * * * had not only obtained

almost the entire control of her mind, but had already made her a convert to her own peculiar and most unfortunate views of Christian duty and principle. Her warfare against all superfluous or ornamental articles of dress was yet waged, as in the early part of her fanatical career; and her young disciple was persuaded in all respects to conform to her notions upon this subject. No article of apparel was allowed beyond the requirements of decency, to which were added various austere observances, abstinence, fasting, &c. One day in every week was strictly observed as a fast; and the season was occasionally extended to three, or perhaps changed to a whole week of rigid diet upon bread and water. These observances were instituted to humble their own souls, and increase their zeal and their faith in labours and intercessions for the souls of others. It was at this period that Mrs. Folger's spiritual guide began to claim revelations from heaven; or, in other words, the direct teachings of the Holy Spirit, in regard as well to all her own personal concernments, as to the affairs of the church: and in order that the connection may not escape attention, it is well here to remind the reader, that we are now speaking of events occurring simultaneously with the proceedings of "*The Holy Club*," already described in the present chapter, with which, as has been previously stated, Mrs. * * * was connected.

Having thus overcome all opposition upon the subject of her religious views, and obtained complete and entire ascendency in spiritual matters in his family, the house of Mr. Folger was for a long time

the centre of her operations; and female prayer-meetings were held there on any, and sometimes every, day and evening of the week. These meetings were numerously attended; but notwithstanding the spirit in which they originated, and the unpromising Christian character of the lady-principal, they are, nevertheless, believed to have been productive of lasting good upon the minds of some of those who mingled in, and participated with them. If such was the fact, there is cause of gratitude to that Being who is able to overrule all things for good. "*Notwithstanding every way,*" says Paul to the Philippians, "*whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*" And here it must be noted, that among the ladies most earnestly engaged in those meetings was the late Mrs. Sarah Pierson, the wife of the late Elijah Pierson.

Having removed to the lower part of the city, and connected himself with the congregation of the Garden-street church, Mr. Folger became a convert to Christianity in 1827, under the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Matthews, and attached himself to his church, of which he proved himself an intelligent, active, and exemplary member. In 1829, he was one of those who projected and established the Dey-street church, and one of the four who united in calling the Rev. Joel Parker from Rochester to the pastoral charge of that congregation. But it will presently be seen that he did not remain in that connection.

Some time previous to the year 1829, Mrs. * * *

had removed to the Bowery Hill, which has recently been dug down, but upon which, at that period, stood a range of houses, isolated as it were from the city, pleasantly situated, and deeply imbosomed in an almost continuous grove of ornamental trees and shrubbery. It was a sweet sylvan retreat from the city, and in all respects a desirable place of residence, especially for the summer. Mr. Folger had made arrangements for permanently residing in the lower part of the city; but the continued intimacy of Mrs. * * * having increased her influence, until at length it had become paramount in his domestic as well as religious affairs, he was induced to change his plans. It was the strong desire of this lady that he should remove to the Bowery Hill; and having been taught by the Spirit that it was his duty to do so, she succeeded in persuading him into the measure. Not only that, but she was also taught by the Spirit that it was his duty to sell his fashionable furniture, and substitute therefor merely the plainest articles of necessity—with all of which requirements of "the Spirit" he complied, and removed accordingly. Mr. Pierson also resided at Bowery Hill at the same time, and several other families and individuals in that portion of the city, who were disciples and followers of Mrs. * * *.

It was here, and in the same year, that the celebrated "*Retrenchment Society*" was devised by Mrs. * * *, and organized under the influence of a tract which she wrote, and under her own immediate auspices. This event marks the next stage in the progress of the delusion under which, at a subse-

quent period, so many persons became the victims of Matthews. The members were bound to abstain religiously from all costly articles of dress or furniture—to wear no ornaments or jewels—and to eat no cake, pastry, sweetmeats, or butter—to drink neither tea nor coffee—and, in short, to deny themselves all the luxuries and most of the comforts of life. In the list of the proscribed articles of furniture were, all articles made of mahogany or brass; all pictures, looking-glasses, carpets, curtains, sofas, or rich furniture of any description. And in addition to these inhibitions, they were to fast two or three whole days in every week. This last rule was most rigidly enforced—even upon the tender pupils of a school taught by one of the ladies, who, it is said, were compelled to fast with her, until they would cry for hours after bread and water—until, in fact, in some instances, they were made sick by their abstinence.

Strange as it may appear, the infatuation which, in the present age, could lead to the formation of such a society of anchorites, was by no means confined to the small circle of visionary women in which it originated. It embraced at one time a considerable number of members. Some of them lived in fine houses in the most fashionable parts of the city. They sold their best and most fashionable and showy furniture; and a religious friend informs the writer, that he recollects seeing one of them—a very wealthy citizen, living in a splendid mansion worth at least twenty thousand dollars—at supper in his spacious parlour one evening, with nothing upon

the table but a decanter of cold water, a loaf of brown, and a few pieces of gingerbread, with three or four raw apples. This was the homely fare of an opulent member of the Retrenchment Society, who doubtless thought that he was doing God service—forgetting that consistency would have required him to exchange his palace for a cottage, and distribute all his goods, saving only enough for the purchase of his stinted fare, among the poor, or in aid of the kingdom of that Master whom he was no doubt sincerely desirous to serve. The delusion of the gentleman referred to has since taken a different and less inoffensive turn.

Such is a brief history of the "Retrenchment Society," of which, remembering the circumstances in which he stood, the almost total submission of his lady to the dictates of its founder, Mrs. * * *, and the zeal with which she complied with all its requisitions, the reader will no doubt be surprised to learn that Mr. Folger was *not* a member.

CHAPTER III.

Characters of Mr. and Mrs. Elijah Pierson—Commencement of their Religious Enthusiasm—He conceives a project for Converting the City and the World—Convenes the Clergy—Remarkable visit to his Pastor—Adopts notions at variance with his Church—Opinions against Renting Pews, &c.—Separation from the Church and Removal to Bowery Hill—Joins Mrs. * * *—Fruitless attempts to Reclaim him—Extravagant Proceedings—Communications with the Spirit—Commences Preaching—Extracts from his Diary—Sickness of Mrs. Pierson—A Vision—Commissioned as Elijah the Tishbite—Anointing of Mrs. Pierson—Her Death—Solemn Scenes at her Funeral—Attempt to Raise her from the Dead by the Prayer of Faith—His Prayer—The Burial.

It has already been stated, in the last chapter, that among the residents upon Bowery Hill, were the late Elijah Pierson and his family. Mr. Pierson was a native of Morristown, in New-Jersey. He passed through the several grades of apprentice and clerk in the city of New-York, much to the satisfaction of his employers, and was a highly-respected merchant for many years, enjoying the confidence and esteem of a large circle of acquaintance among business men. Amiable, intelligent, and pious, he was the devoted friend of religion and humanity; and few men spent more time and money in these objects, and in the cause of philanthropy, than he. He was originally a member of the Brick Presbyterian Church in Beekman-street, and subsequently

an elder in the Mission Church in Bancker (now Madison) street. In 1822, he detached himself from the Presbyterian connection, and became a member of the South Baptist Church, in which he was for several years a deacon of exemplary character and deportment. Indeed, he would have been an honour to any church, where meekness, charity, and an unostentatious devotion to the service of his Master were regarded as cardinal virtues. There was not a symptom of undue enthusiasm—not a particle of fanaticism—about him; on the contrary, he was uniformly regarded as an unusually judicious, discriminating, and consistent Christian, full of charity and good works; and the same characteristics distinguished him in all the ordinary concerns of life. He was a favourite among Christians of all denominations; and it may be said, without exaggeration, that no layman in New-York exerted a more salutary and holy influence.

Mrs. Pierson was the eldest daughter of the late Rev. John Stanford, long known to the citizens of New-York as the pious, benevolent, and, despite his great age, zealous and active Chaplain to the Penitentiary, Almshouse, and other public institutions. The daughter, Sarah, was, at the time of her marriage with Mr. Pierson, a widow, and about thirty years of age. Her first marriage had been unfortunate. It took place after an engagement of six years; this long delay was caused by poverty, the circumstances of Mr. Warner, for that was the name of Mrs. Pierson's first husband, being such as not to justify him in marrying. He was engaged

in commercial pursuits, and labouring hard to provide himself with the means of supporting a family. Success at length crowned his efforts, and they were married. Very soon after their union, Mr. Warner was tempted, by a very advantageous offer, to proceed as supercargo to one of the West India Islands, and there died of the yellow fever; and thus his wife became a widow ere she had been six months married. Her grief was deep and lasting; but it yielded, after the lapse of several years, to the assiduities of Mr. Pierson. The exact time of her second marriage we have not been able to ascertain.

In person, Miss Stanford was small, but graceful; and her features, though not, strictly speaking, beautiful, were of a most intellectual cast—full of expression—and eminently pleasing. Her mind was one of a high order, and it had been exceedingly well cultivated. Her conversation was remarkably interesting, not only from the intelligence, information, and good sense by which it was characterized, but also, and still more, from the pure spirit of benevolence and piety which it invariably displayed. The kindness of her disposition was indeed remarkable; the writer was intimately acquainted with her, and, for nearly four years, in the habit of seeing her almost every day; and, during all that time, he can truly say, that he never heard her utter a single word, or knew her to do a single act, indicative of peevishness, envy, ill-humour, or any other unamiable quality. She was mistress of several accomplishments, but that in which she most delighted was music. Of this she was a proficient; and it

may be mentioned, as an evidence of her fondness for it, that she had acquired great skill, not only on the piano and in singing, but also on the flute and flageolet. She had originally belonged to the Episcopal church; but, with her last husband, ultimately joined the Baptists.

Such is a brief sketch of the remarkable and unfortunate couple whose names are closely interwoven with the residue of this history. United and happy in each other—possessing an abundance of this world's goods—with every social, moral, and intellectual quality that can render life delightful—the hands of both ever open to the calls of the needy, and the equally pressing demands of those whom they supposed to be hungering for the bread of life—to all human probability they had a long career of usefulness, virtue, and honour before them. Least of all could it have been anticipated, that their suns should set so soon, and go down, as they did, in gloom and sorrow.

While a member of the South Baptist church, Mr. Pierson had resided in the lower part of the city. It will have been observed in the preceding chapter, that Mrs. Pierson was one of the ladies attending the multitudinous female prayer meetings in 1825, under the auspices of Mrs. * * *, at the house of Mr. B. H. Folger. But it is not known that she gave any other evidence of religious extravagance until about the year 1828.

Some time previous to this date, however, Mr. Pierson conceived various extravagant notions respecting the practicability of converting the whole

population of the city: with a view to which project he convened a large number of the clergy of different denominations. At this meeting one or more of the clergymen thought they discerned the symptoms of an approaching hallucination, although such was not the general impression. Not long afterward, he called upon his pastor early one morning, for the purpose of conversation upon the same subject, and evidently under great excitement of mind. In this interview, which was extended through the whole day, he declared that he had received new light upon spiritual subjects. He went at length into a statement of his newly acquired opinions; and with occasional bursts of enthusiasm, not to say phrenzy, would seize his pastor by the hand, exclaiming, "These—these are the truths of God, and must not be rejected." His present object was the immediate conversion of the whole city, which event, he affirmed, would be the prelude to the conversion of the whole world. He wished to kindle a blaze in the city of New-York that the universe would see. One of his plans for the accomplishment of the noble enterprise, was a mission to Europe, for the purpose, as he said, of revealing truths that had never been revealed—all the world being, in his opinion, yet involved, as it were, in Cimmerian darkness. His conversation during the day was, in the main, coherent, and, with the exception of his extravagant views respecting the practicability of an almost instantaneous conversion of New-York and the world, rational—excepting, moreover, the erroneous constructions which he occasionally put upon

some of the passages of Scripture, with which his conversation was interlarded. It was evident from his whole manner, moreover, that he was most sincerely and earnestly bent upon the great work he had in view. It was a day, he said, which he had solemnly set apart for fasting and prayer upon that subject; and from nine o'clock in the morning until night, he was engaged, the entire time, in the most earnest conversation—refusing to partake of a morsel of refreshment during the whole period, though frequently and earnestly requested to do so. The clergyman, readily perceiving what was the state of his mind, indulged him thus long, with a view of allowing him to expend his fervour,—losing no available opportunity, however, of interposing such wholesome remarks, and imparting such advice, as he judged most suitable to the peculiar case and occasion. But it was all to no purpose, and the unfortunate man was soon perceived to be verging farther and yet farther in his extravagant views.

He began soon afterward to express opinions which were evidently at variance with the word of God, though at first not heretical, in themselves considered. Upon those points his pastor, and other religious friends, laboured long and faithfully with him,—visiting his house frequently to converse and pray with him. But the mildness and gentleness of his disposition seemed to be leaving him; and having avowed what were considered erroneous opinions, it was evidently his determination not to retract them,—or at least he was very reluctant to do so, notwithstanding the clear and incontrovertible

arguments which from the Scriptures were produced in opposition to his views. Be that as it may, the friends who were then striving to save him from error received the impression, that, although partially convinced by their arguments, he was nevertheless determined not to yield to the conviction.

In the year 1828, both Mr. Pierson and his wife objected to the practice of taking up collections of money in church on the Lord's day—believing it to be a profanation of holy time. They also objected to the practice of owning and letting pews for the exclusive use of proprietors and lessees, and those who might be favoured with invitations. Among the papers of Mr. Pierson, which will be frequently quoted in the progress of this work, is a statement of the views of himself and his wife upon these questions, which seems to have been drawn up at the request of the church. About two-thirds of this paper is in the handwriting of Mrs. Pierson, and was written, as Mr. Pierson states in a note, "under a very powerful sense of the presence and direction of the Lord." The argument of the pew question is chiefly founded upon the practice of the primitive church, of having all things in common; and also upon James, ii. 1—4. "*My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit*

here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" The argument, however, was not sufficiently convincing to induce the church to relinquish either of the practices of which they had complained. Still they yet continued their connection with the church, for upward of six months; and upon every point but those two, remained the same affectionate, kind-hearted, and humble members as before.

Prior to the removal of the old state prison from Greenwich, Mr. Pierson and his wife had laboured much of the time for two years in the Sunday-schools and among the convicts of that establishment; counting self-denial and hardship nothing, so that they could do good to the souls of men. Nor were their labours unattended with the blessing. After the demolition of that prison, their attention was directed to the condition of the degraded women of the Five Points—for whose spiritual welfare their exertions were instant in season and out of season. Among the unsound and unscriptural notions which Mr. Pierson now held, was that of direct revelations to him of the will of God, through the audible agency of the Holy Spirit. This belief, or pretension, it will be recollected, was avowed by Mrs. * * *, with whom, it must be borne in mind, Mrs. Pierson had been associated as early as 1825. Mr. Pierson was indeed a man of prayer—of habitual, constant prayer; and after he began to entertain these opinions, it was his daily habit to record his religious exercises,—his prayers, and the answers which he received. These prayers were put up on

all occasions, upon every subject of duty or business, for direction in every undertaking, spiritual or temporal, and for every person with whom he transacted business, or was connected in religious duties. There will be occasion to draw frequently hereafter from these closet records, of which the following is a specimen. It is without date; but from its subject, it is probable that it was penned during the labours of himself and wife among the unfortunate females above spoken of.

Prayed for the harlots at Five Points: asked the Lord to give us all the ground whereon the soles of our feet had trod, and all the souls now alive who had heard our voices in that neighbourhood.

Answer. The Lord said, "You must go and fetch them out." The Lord said, concerning the two witnesses, "Thou art one and Sarah the other."

Their differences with the South Baptist Church becoming yet wider and more obvious, Mr. and Mrs. Pierson withdrew from it, and in the year 1829 removed to the Bowery Hill, in the immediate neighbourhood of Mrs. * * *, from whom they had derived their recent views of the direct teachings of the Holy Spirit, and with whom their connection now became more intimate than ever. It was, indeed, a union of congenial spirits; and from the moment of that union, may be dated the commencement of that series of proceedings and measures at the Bowery Hill, which, going from one step to another in fanaticism and delusion, ultimately prepared the way for the advent of the false prophet Matthias.

There can be no doubt of the sincere desire of Mr. and Mrs. Pierson to do good. Their whole religious lives had been spent in cultivating the Christian graces, and in works of universal philanthropy and benevolence. But the operations of the Christian world were too slow for them, and the faith of others did not extend far enough. Hence they had come out from among their former associates, and thought, with the Welsh preacher, that they could set the world in a blaze, while an old-fashioned Christian would be lighting his pipe. Numbers, gathering round the trio, became their disciples, and various associations for objects of philanthropy were undertaken. Among these was a society for the education of children of poor parents for the Christian ministry—as they understood it. Several children were supported and instructed for a time, but the sickness which prevailed there in the summers, broke up the school in 1830, and the effort ceased. A sewing society was organized by the females, the profits of whose labours were to be appropriated to the support and instruction of converted Jews, who were to be sent forth as missionaries. Mr. Pierson now commenced preaching, and applied for orders to the denomination with which he had been connected; but was refused. He nevertheless continued to preach, and converts were added to his flock. Among these were two young Jews, who were supported there for some time. There was a transaction connected with one of them, who desired to marry a sister of the establishment, over which it is judged best to draw a veil. The other went forth

—upon a mission—"since which," in the words of one of the community, "nothing satisfactory has been heard of him." Mr. and Mrs. Pierson had also mainly under their direction, the celebrated Magdalen Institution, which was located there, and one of the annual reports concerning which, made so much noise, and gave such marked dissatisfaction to the public, a year or two afterward. They were likewise with Mrs. * * *, its founder, foremost among the members of the memorable "Retrenchment Society," of which an account has been given in the preceding chapter.

Feeling alarmed at the extravagances into which the people at the Bowery Hill were running, and especially at the increasing wildness of conduct manifested by Mr. Pierson, his former pastor visited his house often, with a view of reclaiming, and, if possible, bringing him back to a more rational course of conduct. He was, however, generally absent; but the clergyman found Mrs. Pierson at home, and in repeated conversations yet discovered in her a delightful state of Christian feeling. As matters evidently grew worse, the clergyman just referred to, with several of his most judicious friends, resolved upon making greater efforts for preserving him from what was evidently an impending delirium. They ultimately succeeded in obtaining several interviews, and talked and prayed with, and for him, earnestly. But he was not to be diverted from the course he had marked out for himself, and which, he said, duty required of him. And the writer is authorized here to remark, that although in his Christian character

he had usually, and on ordinary occasions, shown himself one of the most tractable, meek, and humble followers of his Master, yet when he had made a promise, or determined upon a certain course of conduct, he was one of the most intractable and obstinate of men—seldom holding himself open to conviction, however powerful the arguments that might be addressed to him. His mind was now running upon what he called "the kingdom"—meaning, probably, the kingdom of the Messiah upon earth. It could be no kingdom until established upon the Bowery Hill. The kingdom had now come; and consisted of himself, wife and children, Mrs. ***, Mrs. M——, Mr. L——, Isabella, the black-woman, &c. On the occasion of which we are now speaking, he manifested more than ordinary impatience—not to use a harsher term. But even if irritable and impatient at times, especially when over-excited, the private papers of few Christians would bear stronger evidence of the efforts he made to conquer this defect of his physical temperament, or of the sorrow it evidently occasioned him. As evidence of this fact, the following brief note of a prayer upon this very subject, and perhaps uttered on this very occasion, since it is found on a loose piece of paper, and without date, may be adduced. It is accompanied, as are most of his recorded prayers, with the answer, which he believed to be the audible response of the Holy Spirit:

O, Lord Jesus! I perceive that I have failed in exercising a spirit of love, patience, meekness, kindness, and condescension to my fellows, and especially a spirit of impertinence in disputa-

tion. Now, Lord Jesus, I confess to thee that this has been wrong, and I am heartily sorry for it, and beg thy forgiveness. O Lord! forgive me, and cleanse me from these sins: help me hereafter, Lord, to exercise the opposite graces in a double proportion.

Answer. We have freely forgiven thee and cleansed thee from this unrighteousness.—Thy petition is granted, and thou shalt have help from us so as to enable thee to exercise these graces.

Through the winter of 1829–30, and the succeeding spring, Mr. Pierson continued preaching in his own house at the Bowery Hill; dwelling much upon the subject of baptism by immersion, and likewise prominently advancing the doctrines held by Mrs. * * * and himself, of the direct teachings of the spirit. Notwithstanding the refusal to his application for a license to preach the Gospel, he entertained the opinion that he had been specially called to that office; believing that he had received special intellectual endowments from on high for the priesthood. And if any doubt that monomania had already seized upon him exists, such doubt will be removed by the following excerpt from his diary:—

Monday, 3d Jan. 1830. Lord Jesus, thou hast committed to my care great and precious talents, some of which I see, and others I may not perceive. O, Lord, I wish to improve to the utmost all those talents thou hast given me. I would not bury one of them, but diligently improve them for thy glory. Now, Lord Jesus, I do humbly entreat thee to unfold to me in a clear manner these various talents. Show me their excellency, their value, and how to improve them in the best manner. Leave me not in ignorance concerning any one, nor suffer me to neglect or misimprove any one.

O Lord Jesus! help me, for I need help in these things. Lord, make thy grace sufficient for me, that I may improve thy gifts; and so that having, more may be given me.

Answer. I will undertake for thee; thou seekest to glorify me, and I will help thee: thou shalt prosper abundantly; and to him that hath, more shall be given.

In the month of February following, he proceeded to organize a church; a fact which is thus noted in his diary:—

Sunday, Feb. 28th, 1830. We formed ourselves into a church at Bowery Hill, and subscribed a paper with our hands unto the Lord; this consumed the fore-part of the day, and—came in the afternoon, and was informed what we had done.

The original members of this church were about a dozen, whose names are among the loose papers of Mr. Pierson. Among them was Isabella, a black woman; who, with another black woman, named Katy, was attached to Mr. Pierson's household. Their names are mentioned here, because they will both come conspicuously before the reader in the pages of this narrative. Both entered into all the vagaries and delusions of Mr. Pierson; and one of them (the former) was probably, before the end came, among the most wicked of the wicked.

This community, of which Mrs. * * * was the chief, and Mr. Pierson the preacher, were in prayer and fastings often. For weeks together their meetings were held daily; and fourteen meetings have been known to be holden in a single week. On one occasion, at least, the meetings were continued daily for three weeks—time only being allowed for a few hours' sleep and some slight refreshments. With such labours, added to the exertions of Mr. Pierson out of doors, and those of his wife in the Magdalen Asylum, and among the wretched creatures of the Five Points, the constant abstemiousness required by the Retrenchment Society, and to

frequent and protracted seasons of entire fasting, Mr. Pierson became greatly emaciated, and the health of his wife sank under it. She was taken ill during the winter, and her health rapidly declined with the approach of spring. She was tenderly loved by her husband, and his anxiety for the event, and solicitude for her recovery, were very great. Among the visions which he has left upon record is the following, which he probably understood as shadowing forth the affecting truth that she was soon to be taken from him:—

Friday night, 9 *o'clock*, *March* 13*th*, 1830. I was earnestly begging the Lord to bestow her bodily strength, and I heard a small still voice saying, "Until the ram, I chose the body for a sacrifice." I continued to pray, and heard a small still voice continue to say, "The supper is prepared, O, to the marriage of the Lamb, bring forth the robe!" and I saw it put on. I saw the face of her: she laid down four weapons; and I saw her countenance; and if you ever had the view of heaven, it was like that. I had hold of her elbow, and she asked me if I knew her now. She told me what to do with the weapons; and I saw two wings let down to her from heaven, and she flew away.

Having partially retired from business, Mr. Pierson now spent much of his time in searching the Scriptures and in preaching. His mind, at this crisis, dwelt much upon the first and second resurrection, as spoken of in the Apocalypse. He observed that there was great blessedness laid up for those who would have a part in the first resurrection; and, as he read the signs of the times, he supposed that the first resurrection was very near, and, for aught he knew, the very time when Jesus would make his second appearance; and it was his great desire that Mrs. Pierson and himself should have a

part in this first resurrection. Mr. and Mrs. Folger having now removed to the Bowery Hill, and become members of his church, and participants in the other associations and labours of the community, Mr. Pierson held earnest conversations with Mr. Folger upon this subject.

At length, about the middle of June, the physicians having announced to Mr. Pierson that they had no expectation of the recovery of his wife, he called upon Mrs. Folger, and repeated what they had said—adding that "man's extremity was God's opportunity," and it was his belief that Mrs. Pierson might be restored by faith and prayer, and by obeying the injunctions of the Apostle James, touching the anointing of the sick. Knowing well with what zeal and willingness she had laboured in the Lord's vineyard, "he was willing to try how far God would interpose in saving her life in answer to prayer, and at the risk of being thought crazy, and having his name cast out as evil. He would shelter himself under the word of God." The following entries in his diary occur at this time. The date of the second it is important to bear in mind, as it will be referred to again:—

Friday, June 18, 1830. Day of fasting and prayer for Sarah. It seemed the Lord said, "Sarah thy wife shall recover."

Sunday, June 20, 1830. I have named thee this day Elijah the Tishbite, and thou shalt go before me in the spirit and power of Elias, to prepare my way before me.

On the next, or the following day, according to Mr. Pierson's own relation, which has been fur-

nished the writer by a friend, while proceeding down to Wall-street in an omnibus, God spake to him audibly, and said, "Thou art Elijah the Tishbite—Gather unto me all the members of Israel at the foot of Mount Carmel." This injunction he interpreted to mean, that he must convene the leading members of his church at his house on Bowery Hill. This church, in his view, was the true Israel; and its officers, of course, the elders. He accordingly invited several of the members to his house, on the 23d of June—all of whom had become more or less infected with his enthusiasm, although all had not wandered so far into the mists of delusion as himself. After a special conversation with Mrs. Folger, in which he stated the object of the meeting, she also consented to attend.

Assembled around the bedside of Mrs. Pierson, now evidently near her end, Mr. Pierson quoted the passage from James, heretofore referred to, and urged that it was indispensable to the recovery of his wife that he should literally fulfil that injunction. He had called the elders of the church together, and she must be anointed. Arrangements were accordingly made for that ceremony. Among the persons present on the occasion, were Mrs. * * *, and the black woman Isabella, who was very forward and active. According to the impressions of persons in the adjoining apartment, who were too much shocked by the procedure to be present, Isabella must have been one of the principal actors and speakers in the religious rites and ceremonies that were observed. The fact of the anointing is briefly noted in the diary of Mr. Pierson, thus:—

Monday, June 23, 1830. Anointed Sarah with oil in the name of the Lord, according to James v. 14, 15.

It is not known or believed by the friends of Mrs. Pierson that she altogether approved of this fanatical procedure, notwithstanding what it will soon be perceived her husband said upon the subject; or, if she did, her mind and body had become so much debilitated by disease, that her own views at this time, need scarcely be taken into the account. Either way however, it is now of but little consequence. In a very few days after the anointing she was no more of this world—her purified spirit having ascended to the bosom of her Saviour.* Preparations were made for the funeral, as usual, and a large number of special invitations were issued. Mr. Pierson himself declaring, however, that it would be no funeral, but rather a resurrection. Indeed, he seemed to be fully persuaded that she would that day be restored to life again by the prayer of faith. The universal respect which the deceased had enjoyed while living, as a lady of eminent piety and unbounded benevolence, would of course have produced a large attendance at her funeral, to say nothing of the peculiarity of the case. About two hundred persons

* In relation to the disorder of which Mrs. Pierson died, a medical gentleman acquainted with the whole proceedings at the Bowery Hill, remarks in a letter to the writer:—"I always attributed Mrs. Pierson's sickness and death to her excessive fasting, being so frequently repeated and long continued. Indeed it is very probable that Mr. Pierson himself lost both health and reason from the same cause. I had frequent occasion to speak to patients, whose health was so rapidly declining, in relation to the mischief of this delusion, and received for answer that they belonged to the Retrenchment Society and must fast.

attended, a majority of whom were females. There were also several clergymen of different denominations present. From the lips of one of these, the writer has noted down a full account of the whole of the solemn and awful procedure which followed, and by a physician who was also present he has likewise been favoured with a written account. The latter remarks,—"The hall and rooms being filled, I stood upon the piazza, which opened by a large raised window into the parlour where the corpse lay in a coffin, clad in grave-clothes. Soon after I took this position, where I could hear and see the anticipated ceremonies, I was questioned by several persons whether I believed that she would be raised. As I saw they were followers of Mr. Pierson, and addressed the same question to others who looked sceptical, I evaded a direct answer."

Meantime Mr. Pierson was sitting in an adjoining room, opening into the parlour where the corpse was laid, with the utmost tranquillity and composure. One of his clerical friends sat with him for a time, and as the funeral seemed to be delayed, he at length suggested that they had better proceed, and inquired whether there was any particular order of service which he wished to be observed. His reply was—"wait a minute;" and he sat with the same unmoved composure a time longer. Taking an open bible in his hand, he then rose, and entered the room of the assembly, where the body lay, and a scene ensued which almost baffles description. He approached the coffin with a measured and solemn tread, and with deep solemnity, and a hollow sepulchral voice,

read the following passage from the Epistle of James, v. 14, 15.

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them *pray over him, anointing him with oil*, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and THE LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP."

Having read the passage, and looking round upon the audience, with deep and solemn emphasis, he added—"This dear woman has been anointed in the name of Israel's God, and in obedience to this divine command; and I believe that God will fulfil his promise." He then repeated the last six words of the quotation several times, emphasising the word "*shall*," with great force and feeling, and proceeded to argue that the whole passage was to be understood *literally*, which he affirmed to be its certain infallible meaning as revealed to him, and to that dear woman, (pointing to the corpse), and in this faith, he said, she died. He then related a remarkable *revelation* made to him in a carriage as he was coming out from the city a short time previous, and declared, that the same *revelation* was simultaneously made to his wife, then nigh unto death. He stated that the word of the Lord came to him and commanded him to have faith in that promise, and in that faith to conform to the conditions, and the promise should be fulfilled. When he arrived home, he found his wife anxious for his return, and she told him, without hearing anything from him touching the extraordinary communication from Heaven which he had received on the way, that the Holy Ghost had

directed her to instruct her husband in the faith of St. James's testimony, and assured her that she should be raised.

Mr. Pierson farther proceeded to say, that finding that the *moment* she had received the revelation was the *identical time* when his manifestation was communicated, he felt it his duty, and so did that dear woman, (again pointing to the corpse), to do as the Lord had commanded them. He accordingly collected together a number of pious friends who were in the faith, and they proceeded literally to anoint her body with oil, and pray over her, trusting in this promise, "The Lord *shall* raise him up." And though her physicians had told them that she must die, for the consumption had destroyed her lungs, yet they knew the Lord, the Heavenly Physician, could heal the sick, and even raise the dead; and they had strong faith in His word, that if they anointed her, and prayed, the promise would be fulfilled, for "the Lord *shall* raise him up." In that faith, he repeated, that dear woman died. And after exhorting all present to exercise similar faith, and affirming in the language of the Saviour, "she is not dead but sleepeth," he commented on the wickedness of unbelief, and the sin of doubting the word of God. He then unequivocally declared, that whereas, the elders of the church had anointed her with oil and prayed over her, if she were not raised up *to-day, now, on the spot, the word of God falls to the ground.* But expressing his full confidence that the miracle would be performed, for the strengthening of the faith of his disciples, and that the mouths of gain-

sayers might be stopped, by her instant resurrection, he invited all present to unite with him in prayer. He then spread forth his hands over the coffin, closed his eyes, and began a solemn and impressive prayer. The following sentences he *repeatedly* used with most impassioned feeling, and with very little variation of language. "O Lord God of Israel! thy own word declares that if the elders of the church anoint the sick and pray over him, the Lord *shall* raise him up. We have taken thee at thy word; we have anointed her with oil, and prayed the prayer of faith, and thou knowest in this faith the dear woman died, and in this faith we thy children live. Now, Lord, we claim thy promise! God is not man that he should lie, and if this dear woman is not raised up this day, thy word will fall to the ground; thy promise is null and void; and these gainsaying infidels will rejoice, and go away triumphing in their unbelief. Lord God! thou canst not deny thyself. Thou knowest we have performed the conditions to the very letter. O Lord, now fulfil thy promise—now, Lord—O let not thy enemies blaspheme—show that thou hast Almighty power—thou canst raise the dead—we believe it, Lord. Come now, and make good thy word, and let this assembly see that there is a God in Israel!" Thus he continued to pray with a loud voice, and great effort, for nearly an hour, when he closed and sank down into a chair, apparently much exhausted, but yet with the calmness and serenity of perfect and entire conviction. The manner and matter of the prayer had evidently a wonderful effect upon the audience. The attention

of every one was riveted upon the preacher, and all eyes save those of the afflicted and weeping relatives were fixed upon the coffin, as anxiously as though they themselves had yielded to the delusion, and were expecting to see the lifeless body rise up in full health and vigour before them. In the course of the enthusiastic effusion, a number of ladies who were in the faith, and one of whom, as the writer has been assured was Mrs. * * *, stood around the coffin, looking intently for the miracle, and occasionally touching the face and hands of the corpse, expecting to discover signs of returning life. This they continued to do, during the solemn pause which followed the prayer, and a drop of blood oozing at the moment from one of the nostrils, inspired strong hopes that she would indeed be raised up; and two of the ladies stepped up to one of the physicians present, and inquired whether that circumstance was not a token of returning life. Upon this point he himself says, "I could suppress the emotions produced by this scene no longer, and after telling them it was an infallible evidence of death rather than life, and a token of incipient putrefaction, I followed them into the room, and requested the Rev. Mr. ——, who stood by and saw and heard this solemn mockery, to address the people, and if possible to remove the erroneous impressions which would otherwise result from our afflicted brother's delusion." The effect of the whole scene is described as having been paralyzing. A breathless silence prevailed. They looked at each other, and even the clergymen present seemed to know not what

to say. The appeal to one of them, however, made by the physician, as just noted, was responded to in a very judicious and appropriate manner. He rose and remarked with emphasis,—"Yes, this beloved and lamented Christian SHALL rise again—AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST! for it is the promise of God, that all those who are Christ's, he will bring with him at his coming." This remark was followed by a series of timely observations, which had the effect of tranquillizing the feelings of the audience. He proceeded to explain the passage in St. James, and rejoiced in the certainty of its fulfilment. "The Lord will raise her up, but not to-day, nor to-morrow; yet, dying in the Lord, she shall have part in the first resurrection," &c. Several friends then united in requesting the sexton to close the coffin, which was strenuously opposed by a few of the disciples, who insisted that they must wait till 12 o'clock (it was a morning funeral, and had been appointed at 10 o'clock), when the miracle would certainly be performed. In the sequel, when they found it did not take place, the failure was ascribed by Mrs. * * *, Mrs. ——, and other votaries of Mr. Pierson, to the unbelief of some of the persons present, and they upbraided them upon the subject.

Mr. Pierson said nothing himself, but seemed to be lost in devout contemplation, and sat with perfect confidence, awaiting the moment when his prediction would be verified by the restoration of his wife. He was viewed by those not labouring under the delusion, as an afflicted brother, who was entitled to all their sympathies, in his melancholy bereavement,

and his yet more melancholy state of mind; it was at first apprehended that he might interpose objections to the interment of the body; but he did not; and it was laid in its narrow bed in the church-yard in Amity street. Some of Mr. Pierson's particular friends acccompanied him back to his now desolate home, for the purpose of endeavouring to converse with him, and if possible, restore him to a sound state of thinking—re-adjusting the balance of his mind. But all was in vain. He now believed as firmly that she would be raised at 12 o'clock at midnight, as he had done that she would arise at the close of his prayer at noon. Under this impression, he directed her sleeping apartment to be set in order, the bed made up, night-clothes prepared for her accommodation, and all the little affairs arranged, as for the reception of a bride. He also sent down to the city, and procured such delicacies as he supposed would gratify her taste.

On the following day, in conversations with his friends, who continued their attentions to his singular case, he still insisted that she would rise again: God, he said, had promised it, but had not specified the particular day. He now believed her resurrection would take place at sun-rise on the following Sabbath morning; and such was the strength of his faith, that he actually repaired to the grave early on that morning, taking his little daughter with him, to receive her embrace. And yet down to this period, upon every other subject than that of religion, and his religious duties, his mind was as regular, and apparently as sound, as it had ever been. In all

business matters, moreover, he was as accurate and acute as ever.

In the conclusion of this chapter, as Mr. and Mrs. Folger are closely connected with this history, it is proper to state, that they left the city on a tour of hea th the day after the anointing, and were not present at any of the subsequent scenes described.

CHAPTER IV.

Continuation of the History of Mr. Pierson—Yet believes his Wife is to be raised from the Dead—The Negro Woman, Katy, and her Visions—Extracts from Mr. Pierson's Diary—He purchases Katy's Freedom, and sends her Home to Virginia—Continues preaching at Bowery Hill—Sickness there, and dispersion of 'the Kingdom'—Copious Extracts from Mr. Pierson's Prayers, Meditations, and Closet Exercises—Mr. and Mrs. Folger return to the City—They fall again into the Hands of Mr. P. and Mrs. * * *—Further Extracts—Mr. Pierson asserts the Power of Miracles—His Covenant—Extraordinary Infatuation concerning His Wife—The Year 1831—Mr. Folger's History resumed.

It is necessary in the present chapter still to pursue the history of Mr. Pierson. The idea that his beloved wife was yet to be raised from the dead, and restored to him in her own proper person, was so deeply implanted in his mind, as not to forsake him for many months, and even for years afterward. It seems, in fact, for a long time to have had an almost exclusive possession of his thoughts. Among his papers which, from the disorder that prevailed on his death, and the breaking up of the establishment at Sing Sing, seem to have been thrown into confusion, and many of them probably lost, the writer has been enabled to find no record of any spiritual interviews between Sarah and himself, after her burial, except that in the record of his meditations

on the 19th of December following, he says, Sarah spoke to him and said, "I agree to what you have written." It is known, however, that he declared, the day after the funeral, that she had appeared to him, and many believed in the reality of his vision. He also stated subsequently, that he had had several interviews with her—that her body was to be restored to him—and that, according to a revelation with which he had been favoured, she was to bear him a son who was to be called James. Nor did the deceased appear to her husband only. The reader may have remarked, in a preceding page, the name of "Katy" as among the inmates of Mr. Pierson's household on Bowery Hill. She was a woman of colour, from Virginia, a slave, who became a convert to Mr. Pierson's doctrines, and, of course, a member of "the kingdom." This Katy, it appears, had three interviews with Mrs. Pierson after her burial—or rather, the wench had the art to avail herself of the mental malady under which Mr. Pierson was suffering, and induce him to believe as much; and he has recorded the results of the supposed conferences between the departed mistress and her servant as follows:—

KATY'S CONVERSATION WITH SARAH.

Friday, July 2, 1830. She appeared sitting in the coffin, top off—looking well. Spoke about the lamp that guided the Christian to heaven; invisible here because of sin and conflict—at my espousals Elizabeth's hands almost touched her.

Tell Mr. Pierson to keep a close watch over Charlotte—that light mind she has got.

Tell Timothy the time is at hand, and to look to the Lord in faith, and get that load off his back.

Tell Mr. Pierson to give you those stockings you washed for me, and my old night wrapper. I desire you would wear something of mine.

She then rose up and began to fix and give directions for the cleaning and fixing the house. [I was the same day cleaning and fixing the house, and ordered every thing done as I thought she would have had it; this unbeknown to Katy].

She then came to me and put her hands round my neck and whispered to me, and she saw her no more.

Monday, July 5, 1830. Katy was sitting in the door, praying that she might see her. Sarah spoke and said, "This house is the Temple of God. Do you remember the time when you did not want us to move?" She showed how we were living before we were married. We were like two trees dug up by the roots and planted together, and we were covered by one mantle. At that time we conversed together about the work the Lord gave us to do, and it has been carried on ever since. I now had the whole of it on me.

To Katy she said, "Prepare to meet Christ without sin unto salvation." Heb. ix. 28. The Lord said not to murmur. He took her for his own glory, and 'twas his work.

She said, "Behold the bride, the Lamb's wife;" and Katy had a view of the New Jerusalem. Rev. xxi. 9. Our union was an everlasting covenant never to be broken.

Saturday, July 10, 1830. She asked "how the children were." "Have you got all your things?" she asked. The Lord will do for him (me) what He sees best before he goes away. Tell him to go to the Penitentiary, State Prison, Almshouse, and Five Points, if it be only once or twice (Katy and Miss R—— to go also.)

Those things which I had in hand I must lay down well [or finish the work here well].

The last work we did together (Five Points) brought us nearer to God than we ever were before.

Then the Lord took her for his own glory. She was as a bright morning star, and God took me for his own glory. I wonder Mr. Pierson has been so long with me in Jesus, and does not know me yet.

She says the mantle, or covering, is still over us, and we are both together in it, and shall never be separated.

Thus much for the visions of Katy, which, as we have remarked in a preceding page, she had "*the art*" to impose upon the credulity of Mr. Pierson.

It is not intended to be uncharitable; the black woman, too, may have been partially subject to the delusion prevailing at Bowery Hill, since mania, like various other diseases, often becomes epidemic; but it will be observed that, like the king of the Mohawks, when he dreamed that Sir William Johnson had given him his gold-laced coat, *she* did not dream for nothing; and the "stockings" and "wrapper" of the deceased were but small items in the total of the gains brought by her visions. Katy was not only a slave, but she had a family in Virginia, to which, of course, she was desirous of returning. By what further appliances she operated upon Mr. Pierson, is not known to the writer; but the following entries in his diary, at subsequent periods, indicate the determination to which he arrived:—

Sunday, Sept. 26, 1830. After prayer concerning Katy's going to Virginia, the Lord said, "She may go. I will be with her, and no evil shall befall her. She shall see her children, and I will direct her and them in the way I have appointed for them."

The following memorandum is of an uncertain date. It is an answer to another prayer respecting Katy:—

"Send her away in peace. She shall return to her own native land, and die there. I will be with her. You may do for her what you please."

The supposed heavenly mandate was implicitly obeyed, as the writer has been informed by an intimate friend of Mr. Pierson. Katy's freedom was purchased for the sum of four hundred dollars. She

was sent back to her family, a free woman, and provision was made for her support, and the money promptly remitted until the decease of her benefactor. This is a beautiful incident in the annals of benevolence, and shows that, notwithstanding the errors of the head, there was a current of sympathy for human wo in his heart which neither error nor fanaticism could chill.

Mr. and Mrs. Folger having returned from the country in the month of July, were informed of the occurrences which attended the death and burial of Mrs. Pierson, and which, they were also told, had induced those acquainted with the circumstances to pronounce Mr. Pierson a deranged man. They lost no time in having an interview, and were satisfied from his conversation, and the explanation of his views, that he was not deranged—a conclusion which proves very clearly that they were getting yet more deeply involved in the delusion themselves. Mr. Pierson spoke to them of the "first resurrection," and contended that he had only been in error as to the time, but requested them not to recur to the subject in future. He continued to preach as before, and with yet stronger confidence, inasmuch as he construed the communication made to him on the 20th of June into a special commission. No child ever believed more implicitly what was told him by a kind father, than he believed that the Spirit had said to him, "I have named thee this day Elijah the Tishbite," &c.; and henceforward he was greatly anxious to relinquish his commercial pursuits and devote himself entirely to the ministry. To the

question, whether he had received the appointment by an audible annunciation, he replied, "I *heard* it. *You* could not have heard it; but I heard it as distinctly as I ever heard any thing in my life." He had another motive to continue preaching, from a promise which, he says in his diary, God made to him on the 4th of July, "If thou wilt preach my Gospel, thou shalt have thy wife."

In the month of August, the intermittent fever broke out with severity upon the Hill, and the families of Mr. Pierson, Mr. Folger, and others of the community, sickened. The consequence was a separation and dispersion for several months. Mr. Pierson, however, having repeatedly made the subject of a removal or flight into the country a subject of special prayer, declined leaving, in obedience, as he supposed, to the direction of the Holy Spirit. The following are extracts from his exercises upon this occasion. Nothing can manifest stronger confidence in God, or greater sincerity:—

August 16, 1830. O Lord Jesus, I am thine, and thou hast all power in heaven and in earth; thou hast power over the body to heal and to make sick.

Now, O Lord Jesus, I commit my body to thee, and pray for thy watchful and fatherly care over me for time to come. Direct me concerning diet, clothing, exposures to the weather. If I take any thing hurtful, or do any thing hurtful, do thou watch over it and turn away the evil from me. If thou seest good to leave me to sickness, do thou be with me and guide those who have the care of me; and in all things, even as a tender mother watches over her offspring, so do thou watch over me and preserve me for thy work and service.

Answer. I have accepted thee, and my word shall be sure unto thee.

August 25, 1830. O Lord Jesus, I am thy servant, and I now ask counsel of thee concerning my future work. Lord, is it thy

Paul, and thy wife Barnabas—she shall come and labour with thee, thou hast done all I required of thee."

Morristown, Wednesday, September 1, 1830. O Lord Jesus, I am thy servant, and thou hast brought me here. Thou knowest the tender recollections which meet me on every hand, and in almost every object on which my eye fixes. Lord Jesus, I flee to thee for refuge and strength in this time of need. Grant me, Lord, what I need, so that I may glorify thee while here. Lord, I beseech thee help me in my outward conduct, in my conversation; give me sound wisdom in all temporal matters, and in all things, so that I may not give offence to any, or bring a reproach on thy name.

Answer. Thou seekest my glory, and thou shalt have strength, and shalt glorify me.

While meditating on the scenes in which Sarah had been with me here, the Lord said to me, "This is the last trial I will lay upon thee concerning this matter. It was needful for thee to come here where the people had seen thy attachment for her, that they might also see my power in supporting thee in this trial. Thy will be done."

Sunday, September 19, 1830. O Lord Jesus, I am thine, and desire to do thy will. Now, O Lord, be not angry with me if I come again to thee for sure direction whether I must stay in the house till May next, what arrangements I shall make for the care of the children, their schooling, and all they need; for Timothy, and what he needs; and for my own comfort and reputation; and for thy work, and all other things needful and proper for me in my circumstances.

After much earnest intercession concerning the above, the direction of the Lord was,—

1st. You must remain—you will not please me except you give up all thoughts of going away; they are hurtful to my work.

2d. Made known the other things to the Lord, and pleaded for Sarah to be restored to me, to take care of all these matters. The Lord said it should be speedily done, and that I must write it down, for there should be a performance of the things promised.

O Lord, I come to thee to ask counsel of thee, when I must bring my business with Mr. S. to a close, whether at the end of the present year, or at the end of one year from that time. O Lord, direct me and him about it, and let every thing be done in peace and good will.

Answer. Thou must close thy business at the end of this year.

I have need of thee for my work, and cannot spare thee longer. I will satisfy his (S.) mind, and he will let thee go, and thou shalt have wherewith to live.

O Lord Jesus, my mind is often burdened and distressed with the fear, that in the work thou hast given me to do I may by some means be led astray into some false way.

O Lord, I commit this matter to thee, and do earnestly entreat thee, for thy great name's sake, so to guide and direct me in all thy work, that I may be kept in thy way and from all error. O Lord, for thy name's sake, for thy people's sake, for thy truth's sake, help me in this matter. O Lord, the eyes of many are upon me, waiting for me to fall.

After earnest prayer on the above, it was said,—

"We will undertake for thee; we will be with thee in all that we command thee to do, and thou shalt not fail or be discouraged till all be accomplished. Our power and strength are pledged for thy support, and thou shalt have them in time of need."

O Lord Jesus, I am troubled with various temptations which I desire to mention to thee, and entreat thy help to strengthen me against them, and to raise me above their influence.

1st. The thoughts of what will be said when I shall baptize in thy name, it's being out of order, &c.

2d. What is said about my visions, revelations, &c., the danger of walking in this way, &c.

3d. Fear that the work will eventually fail and come to naught.

4th. Fear of being left to want on leaving the business.

Now, O Lord, I cast these burdens upon thee, and pray for deliverance from them, and any others thou seest me labouring under. O Lord, raise me above them, and enable me to rejoice in what has heretofore been a burden.

After prayer upon each article separately, the Lord answered,

1st. I will strengthen thee: I will remove it from thee, and thou shalt rejoice in thy work: I have called thee to preach and baptize.

Answer 2d. We will strengthen thee, and these things shall be no hinderance to thee.

Answer 3d. Thou hast cast this burden upon me; I will take it from thee, that it be no longer a burden to thee.

Answer 4th. Write—"the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and that they that serve him shall be fed with the finest of the wheat, and shall have abundance of every good thing—for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Amen."

September 22, 1830. This morning, while in prayer, I had in the spirit a full view of the Father and the Son, Sarah standing be-

tween them. The impression made on my mind was, that the Lord was preparing her for her return. This view continued most of the day.

September 28, 1830. When I awoke in the morning, my mind was filled with the thoughts of what Elisha did after Elijah had cast his mantle upon him, in sacrificing the oxen with which he did his work—thereby intimating his determination never to return to worldly employments again. It appeared to me my determination to leave business must be of the same character, or that it was such.

Sunday, October 3, 1830. Had a season of earnest prayer for Sarah's resurrection in the body; though the Lord appeared displeased with me in other things, and rebuked me, yet he said concerning this, "Thy prayer is heard."

Monday evening, October 4, 1830. Went to the Lord in earnest prayer—humbled myself, and made confession of sins. The Lord said, "These are forgiven thee, go in peace." Asked whether I had done wrong in speaking about my faith in Sarah's resurrection to Mrs. D—— and sister J——. The Lord answered, "Thou hast done no wrong." Asked if I ought to speak my mind about it in time to come. He said, "My Spirit will teach thee when to speak and when to forbear." Told the Lord how many thought concerning my being ordained of men. He replied, "Thou hast been set apart according to my mind, and hast no need to go to men. That I must be willing to bear reproach and be rejected as Jesus was. That I should have his power, and be succeeded in the work; yet I must follow his steps, and not expect better treatment. As the people rejected, I must stand still and see the salvation of God."

The Lord gave me much precious encouragement and many promises after I had humbled myself.

Tuesday evening, October 5, 1830. Before meeting, while meditating, the Lord said, "I am come;" and I felt as if it was really so—I felt the Lord was very present.

During the meeting, while one was in prayer and mentioned the grave, the Lord said to me, "This is nothing to thee (the grave), for thou hast triumphed over it by faith" (conquered it). This seemed spoken in relation to Sarah.

Friday, October 22, 1830. At the store opened to John xv. 15, 20. The word "remember," in connection with what follows, was deeply impressed on my mind. It seemed as if the Saviour

spoke it to me, and that I must ever keep in view what he there says, as to me, and as a warning that these things shall be so to me. O Lord, help me to remember!

Wednesday, October 27, 1830. This morning, before going out, went to my closet to pray. At the beginning I had a sweet gentle influence come over me. Jesus came and stood at my right hand, and, putting his hand on my head, said, "Peace be unto you, receive ye the Holy Ghost—as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained. Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Saturday, November 13, 1830. Went to my closet to pour out my soul to the Lord, who said to me, "Ask what thou wilt."

Asked. Lord, I desire to have a heart to walk before thee as Jesus did.

Answer. I have granted thee a heart to do my will as I did my Father's."

Lord, confirm and seal to me from this day all that I have asked of thee of the graces, gifts, and qualifications of body and mind thou didst give Jesus for the performance of his ministry in the world."

Answer. They are sure to thee for ever more.

Lord Jesus, I ask to be delivered from the dominion of death and the grave. When I have finished thy work in the world, grant that I may come to thee (without passing through death) in the way and manner thou shalt see most for thy glory."

When I had prayed this prayer, a solemnity and feeling of the presence of the Lord came over me, and some passages of Scripture, as John xi. 35. "I am the resurrection and the life, &c.; and 26th verse, whosoever believeth in me shall never die.

Answer to the above. "My son, this is a great thing; but as thou hast faith, it shall be as thou hast asked."

After prayer, in meditation, the Lord said, "John's ministry is fulfilled here. I am come to build up my kingdom. Thou art head of the corner. Thou shalt have power to work miracles in my name, and to do many mighty works. Write these things down, that others may know my power, and see my faithfulness.

Thou hast asked all I designed: go in peace (from thy closet.) I have blessed thee, thou art my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

The Lord said, thou art a wonder to Angels, because of thy faith.

This evening the Lord said, "This is my covenant with you, saith the Lord; thou shalt have Sarah thy wife, and she shall be with thee in all thy work, and shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name James. Thou shalt have Abraham's blessing."

Sunday, November 21, 1830. Went to the closet to pray; had sweet communion with my beloved Saviour. Entreated the Lord to confirm to me the covenant and blessing above written (13th November) respecting Sarah, that it might be an everlasting covenant between us, and that my soul might rest upon it with unwavering confidence.

Answer. It is confirmed unto thee this day for an everlasting covenant between us, and thy soul shall rest upon it as upon the rock of ages. Go write it down."

Late in the autumn, Mr. Folger and his wife having returned to New-York, without, as it would seem, directly renewing their association with the Bowery Hill community, were sought out by Mr. Pierson and Mrs. * * *, and unhappily again fell under their influence. Mr. Pierson repeated to them the exercises of his mind during their separation, and informed them, among other things, that he had received the gift of the laying on of hands. He then laid his hands on the heads of Mr. and Mrs. Folger, their children, and on Mrs. * * *. But his gifts did not stop at laying on of hands. He was next endowed with the power of working miracles. The following note in his diary is without date, but that which follows indicates about the time when it was probably written :—

The Lord encouraged me to faith; and, in relation to miracles, said I might do whatever I could. Nothing should be impossible to me.

In relation to converts, I might have as many as I would, if it were to the number of one hundred forty and four thousand.

December 1, 1830 Thy petition for the gift of faith to work miracles in my name is granted.

Sarah must first be raised up—this is the first miracle to be wrought—this is to the work what the promise of the Spirit was to the disciples before the day of Pentecost. Nothing can be done till this is done.

Concerning the first resurrection, it was said, "The kingdom first to be set up; the way of the Lord prepared; the gospel preached among all nations. Thou shalt be with me in Paradise before that time, but shall come with me when I come."

Mr. Folger and his wife being members of Mr. Pierson's church, regarded it as a duty to receive baptism by immersion. But difficulties were in the way, inasmuch as he had applied to the clergy in vain for ordination. These parties, and Mrs. * * * having (as he states in his diary) expressed a willingness to be baptized by him, he asks counsel of God on the 9th of December:—

Now, Lord Jesus, I commit this matter to thee, and pray thee to take it into thine own hands; direct all things concerning it; bring it to pass in thine own way and time, and let us know it.

Answer. I have accepted this burden of thee. I will bring it to pass in my own time and way, and will glorify myself in it. Thou shalt know the time.

December 11, 1830. Lord Jesus, thou hast said to me, as my Father sent me, even so do I send you. Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.

Lord Jesus, I do gladly receive thy command, and promise obedience, relying on thy gracious promises.

Answer. My grace is sufficient for thee.

Now, Lord Jesus, I do make a firm covenant with thee this night, take me for thine own servant, do with me what thou wilt. Send me when and where thou wilt, to preach thy Gospel, and in every thing let thy grace be sufficient for me.

"Lord Jesus, now grant me every gift and grace I need to do thy work and glorify thee on earth; even as thy Father didst furnish and send thee, so do thou qualify me, that as thou didst, so enable me to finish the work thou shalt give me to do on the earth.

"Lord, confirm all the promises thou hast made me since thou hast called me to preach thy Gospel.

"Now, Lord Jesus, my beloved Saviour, I have committed my all into thine hands, relying on thy loved power. Accept my offering, and let this covenant be established between me and thee, and when dangers and difficulties surround me, be thou my mighty helper and deliverer.

ELIJAH PIERSON.

Answer. My son, I agree to this covenant, and it shall be established between me and thee for ever.

After the above was written, in meditating thereon, the Lord said, "Now thou art mine—now will I bless thee and glorify myself in thee. The covenant of my peace is with thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thy companion shall be raised up, and shall be with thee in the work, and shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name James. When you have done my work, you shall ascend up to me, and not pass through the grave."

December 19th, 1830—*Sunday.* After the family had gone out, went to prayer—besought the Lord to teach me what to pray for; the words, "He was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," came into my mind. The Lord said, pray for the Holy Ghost. After prayer it was said, thy petition was granted. Thou hast received the Holy Ghost in all his miraculous influences.

I asked if there was any outward visible sign. The Lord said, "No: it was from Spirit to spirit. Thou hast received the Holy Ghost, and shalt work miracles and wonders in my name. Thou shalt prophecy in my name to the people, and thy word shall be established. That which thou hast spoken concerning thy wife shall be fulfilled. My word (James v. 15) on which thou hast relied shall be established, that the people may know my faithfulness. My kingdom shall come, &c. Set up with power and great glory, and be extended over the whole earth. Thou shalt prophesy to many nations, and thy wife shall be with thee; and when you have finished your work, you shall both of you together ascend up to heaven like Elijah of old. What is written in Revelations, 11th chapter, relates to you and your work. The second coming of Jesus Christ, and the first resurrection, will not take place till after your ascension to heaven."

December 26th, 1830—*Sunday.* The Lord said, the key of

knowledge is given unto thee. Thou shalt open and no man shut, and shut and no man open.

December 27th, 1830. Prayed concerning Sarah; asked the Lord to show whether I had rightly understood his promise to raise her up in the body, and if she would be with me in the work. The Lord said, Did I ever give you a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish.

December 31st, 1830—*evening*. Lord Jesus, this is the season for giving and receiving gifts, and by thy help I have given to the members of the family; and now I come to thee, O Lord, and pray thee to condescend to me. Lord, thou art my friend, my helper. Lord Jesus, I would give thee a gift and ask thee a gift. Lord Jesus, I would give thee my heart, and I would ask thee, Lord, to give me thy heart in return—the heart thou hadst while on earth. That meek and holy heart, filled with love to God and man, zeal, wisdom, purity, and every grace.

Answer. My son, I have accepted thy gift, and thy petition is granted unto thee to the uttermost. Write it down.

Lord Jesus! I desire of thee to raise up and restore to me my companion Sarah. O Lord, let it be for my New-year's gift. Let it now come to pass.

Answer. Thy request is granted unto thee, and it shall be done.

Wednesday, January 12th, 1831. Concerning ordination, the Lord said, "Thou hast nothing to do: thou hast committed it to me, and I will bring it to pass."

The following is without date :—

"When the true prophets begin to appear, they will be holy men, endued with the Holy Ghost. They will preach the true doctrines for those days. These doctrines will be the reverse of what the false teachers are preaching, and so different from what people have believed, that for a time they will be considered deranged, mad, wicked persons. There will then be a special fulfilment of the Saviour's words, John xvi. 2, 4. John xv. 20, 21.

"They shall put you out of the synagogue—yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service; and these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor me."

Extracts might be multiplied to an almost indefinite extent, all written in a kindred spirit of love to God

and man, and extending through the year 1831, and a part of 1832. So particularly was the author of these strangely wild, and yet singularly pious, devotional effusions, in asking counsel of God on every occasion of business or duty, that a history of his worldly, as well as of his religious life, might almost be compiled from his prayers. But after the middle of 1832 his diary seems to have been much neglected—the religous fervour which it previously breathed in every sentence had evaporated; until, at length, the entries consisted for the most part of mere dry memoranda of dates and facts. There is, moreover, throughout all his prayers one peculiarity, which may not have caught the attention of the reader. In all his supplications to the Saviour, he nowhere recognises him as CHRIST, or, THE ANOINTED. The words "Lord Jesus" occur frequently and affectionately, but nowhere does he say "Jesus Christ;" and the writer has been informed that he would not allow the consecrated title of CHRIST to be applied to Jesus, the son of the Blessed.

In the spring of 1831 Mr. Pierson removed from Bowery Hill into Fourth-street, as also did Mrs. * * *—occupying a part of the same house. The dwelling was spacious, and Mr. Pierson reserved the most ample apartments for himself—the largest of which was fitted up as a chapel for his meetings, and consecrated for that purpose. Mr. Folger at the same time removed from the city to Singsing—the health of himself and wife having been but indifferently good for months, and a country residence being desirable. Still being anxious to receive the holy ordinance of baptism by im-

mersion, they were baptized at Singsing by the Rev. Mr. Frey, and were admitted into the fellowship and communion of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, with which they worshipped until their return to New-York in the following autumn.

Mr. Pierson was then preaching, to use his own language, like Paul at Rome, "in his own hired house," in Fourth-street; Mr. Folger and his wife worshipped for a time with a Baptist church in the upper part of the city, until Mr. Pierson again approached them with overtures to attend the meetings at his own house. Complying with the request, they found him preaching that the days of the apostles were to be revived; and he urged upon them to exercise their faith in the Lord, that the gifts of the apostles might be restored to them—in one word, that, like the disciples of Jesus Christ, they might be enabled to heal the sick, cast out devils, and raise the dead. He likewise continued to denounce those errors of the church which had first induced him to withdraw from the South Baptist Church, viz. the renting of pews, receiving collections on the Sabbath, and paying salaries to clergymen. It is not to be denied that he succeeded in making some impression upon both Mr. Folger and his wife; but they again separated in April, 1832, on the return of Mr. Folger to his country residence at Singsing. Business engagements called him yet farther into the interior of the country; and the first information he received of the arch-deceiver, in whose toils he afterward became so deeply entangled, of any particular note, was contained in the newspapers, in August or September, 1832.

CHAPTER V.

Another extraordinary case, commencing in religious depression —Frequent mistakes in the treatment of such cases—The Patient travels to New-Orleans—Thence to England and France—Returns to New-York—Apparently recovers health and elasticity of spirits—Becomes acquainted with Mr. Pierson —Falls into his Views—Extraordinary Fasting—Its Effects— Commences Preaching—Extracts from Mr. Pierson's Diary— Appearance of Matthias to Pierson and his new Associate— His Annunciation—They receive and embrace his Doctrines —Remarkable Coincidence—Pierson becomes John the Baptist—Heads of a Sermon—The Impostor is taken to the house of M. H. S.—Luxury and Extravagance—Rich Costumes —Specimen of Matthias's Orations—Further Extracts from Pierson's Diary—Fancies his wife's Spirit inhabits another— Remarkable Notes—Letters to Mr. Pierson.

AMONG the attendants upon Mr. Pierson's preaching "in his own hired house" during the winter and spring of 1832 was a highly respectable merchant, instead of whose name the letters M. H. S. will be substituted, and of whom it is necessary to give some account in detail. He was naturally of a contemplative mind, ardent in his attachments, and withal of a somewhat enthusiastic temperament. No man was more universally esteemed than he, for his many excellent qualities of head and heart, by all who knew him. Until the month of January, 1830, his health and spirits had always been good. An alteration was then observed in his conduct, which, continuing to increase, became a cause of uneasi-

ness to his friends. He was not only pensive, but became so exceedingly depressed and gloomy, that serious apprehensions were entertained for the result. At length he took a friend into an upper chamber and poured out the burden of his soul—the eternal interests—the salvation of which was now his chief concern. Every thing that tenderness and sympathy could dictate was done to alleviate his mental sufferings; but for a long time without any beneficial effect. It was a case of deep conviction of sin,—a soul convinced that it was lost without the pardoning mercy of God—feeling itself helpless—tortured by horrible anticipations—trembling under the condemnation of the violated law, as proclaimed from the burning mount of an offended Deity—and longing to hear the still small voice of mercy,—but ignorant of the true and only method of obtaining pardon and peace by the simple act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the entire surrender of the heart to Him. This depression continuing to increase for months, he was advised to travel for the benefit of exercise and the change of scenery.

His malady having been pronounced physical, an able physician was employed to travel with him, and thus several months were occupied in a visit to his parental roof in Connecticut, to the Springs, and elsewhere. But all to no purpose: the disease was a wounded spirit; and for such a malady there is but one medicine—the balm of Gilead—and but one physician to apply it. And here, if the writer may be allowed to digress for a moment upon this point, he would offer a few words in reference to

the too frequent treatment of persons thus sorrowing for their sins, and eager to escape the awful penalty due to their transgressions. In cases of genuine brokenness of heart, where the sufferer is in darkness and "has no light," in the view of the writer, it is a mistake too often committed, even by very pious friends and counsellors, to attribute the depression—the gloom—the anguish of soul—in the main to physical causes. The patient feels that it is not so—he knows that it is not so; and he says with Job, in his own bitterness of heart, "miserable comforters are ye all." The truth is, there are hundreds and thousands of excellent, kind-hearted, and deeply religious people, whom it has pleased the Most High to lead gently to the mercy-seat,—upon whose hearts the Holy Spirit has breathed without breaking and crushing them to pieces,—and who do not, and cannot truly understand and sympathize with those who are called to pass, as it were, through the very flames of Sinai; who, for wise purposes, are kept for weeks, and months, and years in the valley of the shadow of death—in the depths out of which the Psalmist cried (Ps. cxxx.), and whose anguish of soul—whose agony—can be felt by none but themselves. For such cases, the best counsellors and comforters, aside from God's invitations and promises in his own word, are those Christian friends who have been called to pass through deep waters themselves.*

* The practical books which the writer would recommend for such cases are, first of all (the Bible excepted), Bunyan's "Jerusalem Sinner Saved;" and next to this, "Owen on the

But to resume the narrative. Returning again to the city, Mr. M. H. S. was yet more gloomy than before. An overland journey from New-York to New-Orleans was then undertaken for his diversion,—his brother and another friend accompanying him. This journey was made as pleasant as possible by traversing the most interesting regions of country, but with little or no improvement of the mind of the sufferer. There were, indeed, short intervals of comparative relief—moments in which the rays of light broke through the gloom—but they were few and transient. From New-Orleans they embarked for Liverpool, although Mr. M. H. S. did so with great reluctance. He shut himself up in the cabin for many days in a state of the most wretched despondency. Being at length forced upon deck while midway of the ocean, the transition from gloom to the excess of joy was instantaneous. The boundless expanse of the heaving ocean, and the bright sky, seemed to give him the most extravagant delight. But it was soon over and gone.

After visiting Ireland, and the British and French capitals, they returned to New-York in May, 1831. While abroad, he was unwilling to remain an hour in any one place, and was apparently utterly inattentive to every thing around him. His habits, during the whole of his journeyings, were very de-

cxxxth Psalm," "Christ our Example," by Caroline Fry, "The Progressive Experience of the Heart," by Mrs. Stevens, "Bickersteth on Prayer," and the incomparable series of Experimental Guides, recently published by the Rev. Robert Philip, commonly called "Philip's Guides"—to which may be added, Abbott's "Corner-stone."

votional, both in regular and ejaculatory prayer; and he frequently visited clergymen to hold conversations, but obtained no relief.

The summer of this year was again chiefly spent in travelling; and as he entered upon active religious duties his mind became more rational and composed. He purchased a country seat, and attached himself to a Presbyterian church in the neighbourhood; and was only distinguished from other professors by his activity and excess of zeal in the temperance cause, and his enthusiasm in religious meetings. In the autumn he returned to the city—declared himself well and happy—and summoned his relations and friends around him to celebrate a jubilee, as he called the occasion.

He now resumed his business, but declared his purpose to have it conducted upon different principles than before. He determined to introduce religion into the store; and to exhort his clerks upon that most important of all subjects, begging his friends, however, to check him when they discovered symptoms of going too far. For a time his affairs proceeded well; his tranquillity of mind had returned; and he had become peculiarly happy in religious contemplations, and in deeds of benevolence and charity.

It was in the month of February, 1832, that he inquired of a relative whether he was acquainted with Elijah Pierson. It subsequently appeared that he had had an interview with Mr. Pierson on the 29th of December; and, as we have seen, he was himself precisely in that state of mind to be operated

upon by so sincere and excellent a man as that gentleman was universally known to be—aside from his religious hallucination, of which his new acquaintance was not aware, if, indeed, he was in a condition of mind to appreciate it. Having made the inquiry as aforesaid, he proceeded to extol Mr. Pierson as one of the most heavenly-minded men in the world. On being informed that Mr. Pierson was not considered to be exactly in his right mind, he replied—"Oh, it is not so now." He then spoke of the manner of his becoming acquainted with him, and described the meetings at his house, the character of his preaching, &c. He was again cautioned by his anxious relative, and informed of the manner in which Mr. Pierson had behaved at the time of the death of his wife. All this he admitted, but added, that it amounted to nothing; and even if he had acted in a rather wild and eccentric manner on that occasion, he was now one of the most perfect and rational men in the universe. Hitherto, since his return, he had been a constant attendant upon church; but he now withdrew, and listened only to the preaching of Mr. Pierson. In short, their views soon became perfectly coincident, and withal profoundly extravagant. He, too, soon commenced preaching, and the new spiritual friends held their meetings at each other's house alternately—each doing the preaching in his own, and attended by the faithful of "the kingdom."

His next step was the adoption of Mr. Pierson's system of fasting—and even going beyond him. On one occasion he fasted rigidly seven days, and

at another time attempted to fast fourteen. He wasted away to a mere skeleton, so that his friends were apprehensive that he would sink down in the streets from exhaustion. Day after day, in the store, would he rinse his mouth with water, taking the utmost care not to swallow a drop, and sometimes he was reduced to such a pass as to be revived only by the application of Cologne water. His practice was to walk frequently on the Battery; and on one occasion he was found in the evening prostrate and helpless from starvation, and carried home. He was continually exhorting others at the store to follow his example, and when affectionately admonished by his friends of the consequences, he would listen to no expostulations—but replied that he must fast, and God would tell him when to stop. At one time a clergyman was called in to persuade him to take food, but he would not; and it was only after his friends had induced Mr. Pierson to come and urge him to eat, that he would listen to them.

During this period, Mr. Pierson continued preaching as usual; and even yet, upon all subjects, excepting those of religion, the resurrection of his wife, and his own personal relations, both to this and the eternal world, he was apparently as sound in his intellect as any man in the city. Nevertheless, the following entry occurs in his journal on the occasion of the burial of his father, Benjamin Pierson, whose funeral he attended at Morristown, on the 12th of February (1832):—

While they were preparing the coffin to let it down into the grave, these words were spoken to me:—"So shall they bury thee, and the third day thou shalt rise again."

Mr. Pierson's meetings were well attended, and converts were occasionally added to his flock, sometimes even from without the confines of the city. Mrs. * * * having visited Newark, made a proselyte there of a Mrs. D——, whose name occurs occasionally in Mr. Pierson's private meditations. About this time, however, she seems to have been wavering; such, at least, is the inference from the following entry in the diary:—

April 12, 1832. Went to Newark. Saw and conversed with Mrs. D——, who appeared disturbed in her mind about the kingdom, and afraid to come to the light, because of the cross coming out of her present connection. She felt ashamed of me and my doctrine. She rejected me, and the Lord rejected her. Nevertheless, she shall be brought in through great bodily sufferings, and the way she ought now to have come in. These words came to my mind when I left the house—"Ye shall see me no more till the day ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Miss B—— was there at the time.

Three days afterward the following entry occurs, which shows that the condition of Mr. Pierson's mind remained much the same as in the preceding autumn:—

Wednesday evening, April 15, 1832. Lord, thou didst tell me to fast and pray three days, and begin this evening, for wisdom to understand the Scriptures, and it should be given me. O Lord Jesus, I ask thee to grant me wisdom to understand the Scriptures; the gift of prophecy; the wisdom of the serpent; the harmlessness of the dove; ability to discern spirits. Grant, also, what thou hast promised—of the gifts and graces thou hadst for the performance of thy ministry—to me, for the work thou hast given me.

The wife of Mr. M. H. S. died in April, on which occasion he pronounced a funeral discourse himself.

By this bereavement his mind became of course still more susceptible of striking impressions. Indeed, both Mr. Pierson and himself were exactly in a state of mind to look for extraordinary events; and thus situated, a stranger presented himself before them on the 5th of May, with the beard of a patriarch, a tall form, and a peculiar cast of countenance, who not only entered into all their extravagant notions, or rather took possession of them as original with himself, but entertained an inexhaustible fund of kindred extravagances, which they construed into new light and wisdom, on the momentous subjects that engrossed their contemplations. With pretensions sufficiently high to fill their disordered imaginations, they at once received him as a being of surpassing excellence, who was to establish the personal reign of God the Father (not the Messiah) upon the earth. This imposing stranger was none other than ROBERT MATTHEWS, or Matthias, as he proclaimed himself. He declared to them that he was the Spirit of Truth: that the Spirit of Truth had disappeared from the earth at the death of the Matthias mentioned in the New Testament: that the Spirit of Jesus Christ had entered into that Matthias, and that he was the same Matthias, the Apostle of the New Testament, who had risen from the dead, and possessed the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth. That he (Jesus Christ), at his second appearance, was God the Father, and that he (Matthias) was himself God the Father, and had power to do all things, to forgive sins, and communicate the Holy Ghost to such as believed in him. He was not,

however, always consistent in regard to the character and attributes to which he laid claim. A religious friend, who, hearing of the arrival of the prophet, and the extraordinary proceedings at Pierson's house, sought an opportunity of visiting him there, informs the writer, that he did not exactly learn from him then that he claimed to be the Deity, or the Messiah. But he nevertheless declared himself, distinctly, to be the angel spoken of in Rev. xiv. 6, 7. "*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*" Be all this, however, as it may, neither of the gentlemen to whom he presented himself was in a state of mind then, or afterward, to observe discrepancies of this character. They believed all that he set forth of himself, then and subsequently, no matter how extravagant or how blasphemous; and he in turn recognised them as the first members of the true church, which, after two years' search, he had been able certainly to identify. He announced to them that, although the kingdom of God on earth *began* with his public declaration in Albany in June, 1830, it would not be completed until twenty-one years from that date, viz. in 1851; previous to which time wars would be done away, the judgments finished, and the wicked destroyed. The day of grace was to close

on the first of December, 1836, and all who by that time should not have come to the true light, or at least, who should not have begun to reform before that period, were to be cut off. Such were the pretensions with which he came before them, and such the doctrines he poured into their minds and ears; all of which, and many more matters equally ridiculous and absurd, they received with unbounded confidence, and forthwith looked up to him, as to a celestial being, with veneration and awe. It was indeed rendered more plausible to Mr. Pierson, probably, by the coincidence of dates. Matthews had been called in June, 1830, and so had he. Matthews began his declaration at Albany on the ninth of June (we believe); he had declared that judgment was proclaimed at Stillwater on the nineteenth of June; and he had completed the declaration at Argyle on the twentieth—the self-same day on which Pierson had received the commission, "Thou art Elijah the Tishbite, and thou shalt go before me in the spirit and power of Elias, to prepare my way before me." He now said, that from the date of that commission, he had preached that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, until the appearance of Matthias. John the Baptist had preached that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand until the Messiah came. Elias, as everybody knows, was only another name for John the Baptist; and hence he concluded that the spirit of John the Baptist had taken up his abode in him, and that he was the forerunner of Matthias. The latter was not slow to favour this deception, and Mr. Pierson was thence-

forward known only among the members of "the kingdom" as John the Baptist; in which character he evinced the docility of a child, and the sincerity of a true disciple.

When Matthews first visited Mr. Pierson's house, the latter was absent from the city on a short visit. Mrs. * * * and her family having previously removed from thence, there was only a servant at home, from whom the impostor learned the day on which Mr. Pierson would return; so that, probably, he was not altogether unprepared for the reception of the stranger, who was at once received as an inmate of the establishment. Their time was for a few days devoted to an interchange of views and opinions upon the subject of religion, and preaching alternately—Mr. M. H. S. being an attentive and enraptured listener. Among Mr. Pierson's papers there are various memoranda of what seem to have been questions of theological discussion between them. There are likewise notes of what were probably the heads of a sermon, or points of doctrine, maintained by his new spiritual guide. The following is a specimen, and may have been a catalogue of the abominations denounced by the prophet on the day of its date.

May 9, 1832.

R. MATTHIAS:—

All who say that the Jews crucified Jesus.
" " that the first day of the week is the Sabbath.
" " that immersion with the clothes on is baptism.
" " that sprinkling is baptism.
" " preaching to women without their husbands.
" " who drinketh wine in bowls.
" " who eateth the Passover in a lower room.

That these memoranda combine the heads of one of his incongruous discourses, and that those who practised such things were anathematized, there can be no question, from the circumstance that they were frequently the objects of his denunciations afterward. At one time he would break out furiously against all men who wore spectacles, who, he said, would be damned; at another, he would denounce bitterly all women who did not keep at home. Like Sarah of old, he insisted that it was the duty of women to remain in the tent. All who did not follow her example would be damned; and such like nonsense.

Mr. Pierson very soon relinquished preaching, as did Mr. M. H. S., and the work of the ministry devolved alone upon Matthews, who, jealous of his dignity, would bear no rivals near his throne. He (Mr. Pierson) suffered his beard and nails to grow long, in imitation of his new master, and conformed in all respects to his instructions. The reasons assigned for thus cultivating the beard without cropping it, and for allowing the nails of their fingers to grow uncut, were, that unless they had been good things, fitting and proper to be worn, men would have been formed without them: and as God had formed Adam with a beard, and as the patriarchs and Jews, God's chosen people, wore their beards long, we have no right to cut them off. This reasoning was conclusive. The houses of both gentlemen were thrown open to him, and their purses and all their earthly substance placed at his disposal. Indeed, it was one of the fundamental doctrines he

taught, that the earth, and all that it contained was his own; and he practised accordingly.

The prophet was now invited to take up his residence at the elegantly furnished residence of Mr. M. H. S., and acceding to the invitation, he remained with him three months. He would doubtless have done so longer, had it not been for what was to him an untoward circumstance, as will appear in the sequel. The best apartments in the house were allotted to his service, and the whole establishment was submitted to his entire control. It was not long before he arrogated to himself, and received divine honours, and his entertainer washed his feet in token of his humility. The female relatives of the family, who had remained there after the decease of the lady of the house, were sent away by the impostor, and he allowed no women to reside there but the black domestics who were of the true faith. From fasting, he taught his disciples to change their system to feasting; and having their houses at his command, and their purses at his service; loving the good things of this world, and taking all the direction in procuring supplies; they fared sumptuously every day.

But this splendid style of living was not enough. The prophet, as the reader was early told, was vain of his personal appearance, and proud of wearing rich clothes. It was now necessary that he should be arrayed in garments befitting his character, and the dignity of his mission. His liberal entertainer therefore, at his suggestion, accompanied him to the most fashionable drapers and mercers in Broadway,

of whom an ample wardrobe was ordered and obtained, made of the richest broad-cloths, and the finest linens that could be procured—embracing every variety of garment, and as many of them as he chose—some of which were made of peculiar patterns, and worn as canonical costumes of his own. He displayed fine cambric ruffles around his wrists and upon his bosom, and to a rich silken scarf, interwoven with gold, were suspended twelve golden tassels, emblematical of the twelve tribes of Israel. His fine linen night-caps were wrought with curious skill of needlework, with the names of the twelve apostles embroidered thereon. Thus decked with finery at the expense of his two special disciples, and feasting on the choicest dainties, under pretext of sacraments, he lived upon, and with them. Meetings were held alternately at the houses of the two gentlemen, where he declaimed in the wild, disjointed, and incoherent manner already described, and often with considerable energy and effect. In addition to his own immediate followers, many others were from time to time led by curiosity, or other motives, to attend the meetings, who were as often shocked by his blasphemies, as amused by his crudities. Some of these occasional auditors received special invitations from Mr. M. H. S. to attend, and others were attracted by the notices which he posted at his place of business and elsewhere, announcing that *Shiloh* would preach at his house at a certain hour, &c. A gentleman who was drawn thither by curiosity, has furnished the writer with a report of one of his desultory harangues, taken down in short-hand

at the time. Being brief, it is here inserted. It will be seen by a remark in the discourse, that the cholera was then prevailing in New-York.

"The spirit that built the Tower of Babel is now in the world—it is the spirit of the devil. The spirit of man never goes upon the clouds—all who think so are Babylonians. The only heaven is on the earth. All who are ignorant of truth, are Ninevites. The Jews did not crucify Christ,—it was the Gentiles. Every Jew has his guardian angel attending him in this world. God don't speak through preachers, he speaks through me, his prophet.

"John the Baptist," (addressing Mr. Pierson), "read the tenth chapter of Revelations." After the reading of the chapter, the prophet resumed speaking, as follows:—

"Ours is the mustard-seed kingdom which is to spread all over the earth. Our creed is truth, and no man can find truth unless he obeys John the Baptist, and comes clean into the church.

"All *real* men will be saved; all *mock* men will be damned. When a person has the Holy Ghost, then he is a man, and not till then. They who teach women are of the wicked. The communion is all nonsense: so is prayer. Eating a nip of bread and drinking a little wine won't do any good. All who admit members into their church and suffer them to hold their lands and houses—their sentence is, 'Depart ye wicked, I know you not.' All females who lecture their husbands, their sentence is

the same. The sons of truth are to enjoy all the good things of this world, and must use their means to bring it about. Every thing that has the smell of woman will be destroyed. Woman is the cap-sheaf of the abomination of desolation—full of all deviltry. In a short time the world will take fire and dissolve—it is combustible already. All women, not obedient, had better become so as soon as possible, and let the wicked spirit depart, and become temples of truth. Praying is all mocking. When you see any one wring the neck of a fowl, instead of cutting off its head, he has not got the Holy Ghost.

"All who eat swine's flesh are of the devil; and just as certain as he eats it, he will tell a lie in less than half an hour. If you eat a piece of pork, it will go crooked through you, and the Holy Ghost will not stay in you, but one or the other must leave the house pretty soon. The pork will be as crooked in you as rams' horns, and as great a nuisance as the hogs in the street.

"The cholera is not the right word; it is choler, which means God's wrath. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are now in this world: they did not go up in the clouds as some believe: why should they go there? They don't want to go there to box the compass from one place to another. The Christians now-a-days are for setting up the *Son's* kingdom. It is not his; it is the *Father's* kingdom. It puts me in mind of the man in the country who took his son in business, and had his sign made 'Hitchcock & Son,' but the son wanted it 'Hitchcock & Father,'

and that is the way with your Christians. They talk of the Son's kingdom first, and not the Father's kingdom."

How men of education and intelligence, as the two principals of his devotees unquestionably were, could be carried away by the utterer of such farragos of nonsense, is inconceivable. If monomania be a curable disease, one would suppose that such an oration would be a sovereign remedy. But the eccentricities of the human mind—who can trace or understand them!

But although the impostor had, to a still farther degree, unsettled the mind of Mr. Pierson, he had not yet erased from his memory the recollection of his beloved Sarah, or banished the idea that she was to be restored to him again. The following extracts, however, show that his reason was becoming daily more disordered and wandering:—

Sunday, June 24, 1832. Second anniversary of the morning when I went to Sarah's bedside, and in the name of the Lord, bid her arise and walk.

She gave me her hand, arose from the bed, and walked round the room, and laid down again.

It appeared to me that this was a pledge of her future resurrection.

While meditating on this subject, the union God has established between man and wife was brought to view as being one flesh. Sarah's spirit was with me. It appeared as if we were remarried. She called me Lord. Several remarkable things occurred.

Suppose I felt as a husband ought, in point of office. She said, I have peace, my Lord. Again, thou hast power, and this shall be a sign unto you that these things were real. It was according to her word. These things appeared real, except bodily presence.

June 29, 1832. The second anniversary of Sarah's death.

In answer to prayers that God would to-day take this matter into consideration:

This is my counsel, saith the Lord; Sarah must be raised up in the body, and be restored to the kingdom of God.

The spirit of Abraham says, I can do nothing without Sarah. I must have Sarah. Sarah says, deliver me, husband—the time is come.

This is my counsel, saith the Lord God of Elijah. Write no more. This is my covenant with thee, saith the Lord, in the appointed time it shall be done.

It was said, in the third year it shall be.

John the Baptist is risen in thee, and will direct thee in things pertaining to his office. These promises are all sealed to thee. Thus saith the Lord.

Sunday, July 1, 1832. Anniversary of Sarah's burial.

Prayed to the Lord that the grave might no longer have power to hold her body.

The Lord said, "I have promised that Sarah should be raised up, and of her own body bear thee a son to be called James. This shall be done at the appointed time."

Asked Sarah, Where art thou?

Answer. In the grave, waiting to be delivered. Abraham, where art thou? At Sarah's grave, waiting for her deliverance. I can do nothing without her. It was said all things must be done according to God's appointment.

This is the last mention the writer has been able to find among the papers of Mr. Pierson of his wife, whom he so dearly loved, and to whose memory he so fondly clung. It is well known, however, that he had latterly imbibed the singular idea, probably after all hope of her resurrection had vanished, that he was the spiritual husband of another—a lady who had been one of the Bowery Hill association. His later belief was, that after the decease of Mrs. Pierson, her spirit had entered into the body of the lady referred to. It is not known how, or exactly when, this strange conceit originated; but it is not more

surprising than many other features of his melancholy hallucination. Among his loose papers, however, are two anonymous notes, in the handwriting of a female, which, taken in connection with a circumstance or two that will presently be related, render it at least possible, that there may have been an artful conspiracy at the bottom of this particular instance of delusion. Mrs. Pierson, it will be recollected, died on the 29th of June, 1830. The following note is endorsed in Mr. Pierson's handwriting—"Received July 20, 1830." And here it must be borne in mind, that, connected with the idea that his wife would be raised from the dead and restored to him on earth, was the farther belief that she would bear him a son, to be called "James." This was one of the promises which he had received from God, and which he has recorded as the answer to his prayers, in perhaps fifty places. The first note is as follows:—

"When my cousin —— was engaged in prayer a few days ago with Katy, I saw a vision which I was directed to write and send to you. I was lost a few minutes, when I beheld my cousin walk into your back-door with the dress which she usually wears. She passed through the entry, and went into the parlour. The difference in her state was, that she was big with child; and I thought in the vision that she was at *home** in your house. I knew not the meaning of it, but was constrained to send it to you. Perhaps the Lord will show you the interpretation. My cousin told me some time ago that the Lord had promised her a son. I never realised that it would be so until I saw the vision."

The second note, in the same handwriting, and attached to the first by a wafer by Mr. Pierson him-

* Italicized in the original.

self, with the memorandum, "Received 27th July, 1830," is as follows:—

"I thought, sir, that an apology was due to you for the abrupt note I handed you. I have felt quite uneasy about it, and wished to say to you, that after I had the vision, I thought I must write it; and thought I had better tell it to you than cousin, as I know she has a remarkably pure mind; and I judged that if she suspected that I let you know [it], it would make her feel very unpleasant. I have taken up a cross in making it known to you: if I have done wrong, be kind enough to forgive me."

It so happens that there was a very remarkable counterpart to this vision of the writer of these notes. The lady possibly referred to, had a vision on a certain night—she being at a distance from the city at the time—in which it was revealed to her, that she was the spiritual wife of Mr. Pierson. And she believed that such was the record in heaven. This conviction was moreover strengthened by another circumstance. On one occasion, her husband being absent, she prayed very fervently that the first person who entered her door, might be him. It happened shortly afterward, and before any other person came in, that Mr. Pierson made his appearance; and the good lady at once concluded, that although it had been written otherwise on earth, yet, in the records of heaven, Mr. Pierson and herself were one. Subsequently, on comparing notes with Mr. Pierson, no doubt was left of the fact; since it appeared that on the self-same night, he had had a similar dream in his own house. On discovering the coincidence they joined hands, and walking into another apartment, where a third person was sitting, presented

themselves, and mutually declared themselves to be, spiritually, man and wife. Whether there was, or was not, any connection between the mysterious notes which have been quoted, and this singular incident of the delusion, is left for the reader to determine.

For the purpose of showing what was the state of mind of one of the gentlemen connected with Pierson and Matthews, at the time of which we are now writing, the following letters are inserted. They were addressed to Mr. Pierson while on a visit to his friends in Morris county (N. J.) The name of the writer is suppressed:—

"*New-York, 20th July*, 1832.

"JOHN THE BAPTIST, OR DEAR PIERSON:

"I have your letter, and am glad to hear that you are well. The angels of destruction are making dreadful havoc, but do not be troubled; they are reaping the tares. The harvest is begun, and not a single blade of wheat can fall or be injured.

"Katy is well, and at the 'Lord's house' often.

"Isabella is also well.

"Matthias is still * * * * * *, thank God! and I think we can no longer say, '*when* he, the Spirit of truth, is come,' &c. Surely this *is* 'the Kingdom of God.'

"The money you spoke of I can use, if you choose to send it, and on your return will place it in a satisfactory shape. I will venture to send you the love of all 'the kingdom.'

Yours, sincerely.

"*New-York, 27th July*, 1832.

"DEAR PIERSON,

"I have your letter, containing twenty-six hundred dollars, which is placed to your credit until I see you.

"You speak of a long letter, but as I have so much to say, that a long letter would be only a beginning; I must wait until we meet. Thanks to the blessed God, we are as strong as brass, and all in perfect health and without any fear; for the eternal God is *our* refuge; it can be nothing else that can give

such courage. Can't you contrive to make the 22d of next month come sooner than that?—John the Baptist must be in his place before we can move.

"Yours, sincerely.

"The kingdom—the kingdom—the kingdom—and nothing but the kingdom of God."

There is yet another chapter to follow, before the scene changes to Singsing.

CHAPTER VI.

Luxurious Habits of Matthews—Description of his Person and Costume—Efforts to attract Observation—Interesting and Remarkable Interview between a Gentleman and Matthews, Pierson, and M. H. S.—Claims to a Divine Character—Specimen of his Preaching—Close of the Interview—Visit of another Gentleman to the house of M. H. S.—Another of the Prophet's Lectures—Attempt of one of Pierson's Friends to Rescue him from the Delusion—Meets with the Prophet—The Interview—His Preaching—Visit abruptly terminated—The New Jerusalem—Strange Conduct of a Gentleman in having his Plate crested with Lions—Arrest of the Prophet and one of his Disciples, on the ground of Insanity—The Impostor is shorn of his Beard—Strange Fancies of M. H. S. at Bloomingdale—Pierson takes a house for Matthews—Manner of passing the Winter—The Establishment broken up in the Spring—Suspected Quarrel—Matthews takes Board at a Hotel—His Conduct there—Pierson's Conversations with the Spirit.

If, as we have seen, Matthews was fond of dress, vain show, and luxury within doors, he was equally pleased with its display, even to ostentation, without. His two chief disciples having ample means, he induced them to set up elegant carriages for his accommodation; and there was seldom a fine day in the summer of 1832, upon which he did not display his beard, his costume, and his carriage in Broadway—accompanied frequently by Mr. Pierson and his two children, or by the other gentleman of whom we have spoken at large in the preceding chapter.

When not rolling in his landau, he was frequently in the street, particularly during the hours of fashionable promenading—dropping in occasionally at the bookstores, and sometimes venturing into an office of resort in Wall-street, always preaching and exhorting in the same rambling and incoherent manner, already so often described—often with shrewdness and momentary energy—and never better pleased than to find himself the observed of all observers.

On bright afternoons, when the Battery was sure to be thronged by fashionable loungers, seeking to kill an idle hour, and by hundreds of people desirous of inhaling the invigorating breezes from the ocean, Matthews was in the frequent practice of exhibiting himself to the multitude, though not exactly mingling in the throng. Selecting well his hour for attracting the greatest share of attention, he would arrive at the Battery-gate in a superb dark carriage, drawn by a noble pair of horses, and accompanied by Mr. Pierson and his children. Descending from the carriage with dignity and deliberation, he would take the children by the hand at either side, and thus, with stately and measured tread, walk to and fro upon the lawn, Mr. Pierson in constant and reverential attendance, for an hour or more—until, having, as he supposed, made a sufficient exhibition of his person, he would retire with the gravity with which he came—making far less impression, probably, upon the multitude than he fancied or desired.

In person he is tall and well-made, although very thin—what is sometimes, and very aptly, called "bony." His height is about five feet ten or eleven

inches, and his frame well-proportioned, although his gait is somewhat awkward, and his movements ungraceful. His walk was always slow, and not wanting in stateliness, or at least that assumption of it which is to be obtained by deliberation, an erect carriage, and a careful avoidance of all hurry or precipitation. His face is sharp—complexion sallow—eyes of a cold light gray—and hair and beard long, thick, coarse, and of a peculiar hue, which is better expressed, perhaps, by the word ashy, than any other. They have originally been of a dark brown, but are now profusely sprinkled with silver-gray—the union forming that singular mixture we have attempted to describe. He always wore his hair long, and parted in waving masses upon each side of his head, leaving a well-defined line of separation running longitudinally along the top of his cranium. His beard, equally coarse with his hair, and still more inclined to curl, was thick and bushy, and covered his breast to the depth of eight or ten inches below the neck. He also wore thick mustaches on the upper lip, and these, being of great length, united so completely with the beard on either side, as almost entirely to conceal his mouth. The coarseness of his hair and beard not being discernible at a short distance, from the great care with which they were kept, and the profusion of ringlets clustering over his shoulders, they were esteemed very beautiful. When conversing, or sitting, as he often would, silent and in apparent meditation, he was in the almost constant habit of cherishing his beard and mustaches—smoothing them down with

his long slender fingers, and seeming to take great delight in feeling them. The predominant expression of his countenance is a cold severity; but with this there is mingled great shrewdness of aspect and, very often, an air of deep abstraction.

His most usual costume while exhibiting himself in the streets of New-York, or upon the Battery, as we have described, was a black cap of japanned leather, in shape like an inverted cone, with a shade; a frock-coat, generally of fine green cloth, lined with white or pink satin; a vest, commonly of richly figured silk; a sash of crimson silk around his waist; green or black pantaloons, sometimes with sandals, and at others Wellington boots (always highly polished), and worn outside of the pantaloons; with a black stock around his neck. As we have already remarked, he was evidently very fond of rich and showy dresses, and seldom appeared two days in succession in the same apparel. Some of his coats were richly decorated with braid, and frogs, and costly buttons; but in shape they were always the same, at least, so far as the observation of the writer has extended, being the kind indifferently called frock, or Wellington. Altogether, his appearance was striking and calculated to attract notice, but not remarkably imposing.

It was during the same season—the summer of 1832—while residing with Mr. M. H. S., though spending a good portion of his time, as we have seen, with Mr. Pierson, that a remarkable interview took place between Matthias and his two chief disciples and another gentleman, which is not only in-

teresting in itself, but will serve strikingly to illustrate the state of mind under which at least two of the parties were labouring. The gentleman referred to has great strength and precision of memory, and the narrative has been carefully taken by the writer from his own lips. For the purpose of preserving the scene in a dramatic form, the gentleman referred to will be called Hervey. It is as follows:—

One morning in the summer referred to, Mr. M. H. S. called upon Mr. Hervey, and inquired whether he would attend a meeting at his house, in ——— street, at half-past three o'clock that afternoon. He added that he had the privilege of entertaining under his roof, the most extraordinary man that ever set his foot upon this earth.

Mr. Hervey. You do not presume to say that he was a greater man, or a greater being, than the Lord Jesus Christ, surely?

M. H. S. Sir, it is Shiloh himself: He who was, and is, and is to come.

Mr. Hervey. Sir, you will excuse me from attending a meeting where such a being as you represent is to officiate.

M. H. S. But I am extremely desirous that you should hear the words of wisdom which continually flow from the lips of this extraordinary personage.

Mr. Hervey. Well, since you are so desirous that I should see him, in order to gratify you I will call upon you after the meeting shall be over, if you will name the hour.

M. H. S. At about five o'clock, sir.

And here the morning interview terminated. At

the hour designated, the gentleman presented himself at the house of the merchant who had been so desirous of procuring an interview, where he was cordially received, and conducted into the front parlour. Judging from the number of benches, chairs, and other seats in the apartment, it appeared as though there had been a meeting of considerable magnitude. They had all retired, however, with the exception of one person—an individual who was sitting in one corner of the room, in the most humble, meek, and docile attitude that can be imagined. His beard was bristling out about an inch long, and his hair—like his beard, black as jet—was parted over his forehead, after the manner of the pictures of the Messiah. The following dialogue ensued :—

Mr. Hervey. Is that the gentleman to whom you alluded as being the Shiloh?

M. H. S. Oh no, sir! This is John the Baptist.

John the Baptist. Who is not worthy to unloose even the shoe-latches of the one who is up-stairs.

On approaching yet nearer to this grotesque and demure-looking gentleman, and scrutinizing him closely, the dialogue was continued.

Mr. Hervey. Why, you are my old friend Pierson, whom I have met abroad. Surely (surveying him yet more closely) you are Elijah Pierson; nothing more or less. And do you presume to say that you are the veritable John the Baptist? Surely you do not pretend to say that this head upon your shoulders (laying his hand upon his head), is the

very identical head that was taken off by Herod, and brought to his daughter in a charger?

M. H. S. The very same.

Mr. Pierson. No: I do not mean to be understood as saying that this head of mine is the very same head that was cut from the body of John the Baptist; but I mean to say, that the spirit of Elijah Pierson, leaving this tabernacle (significantly pointing to his heart), the spirit of Elijah the Prophet thereupon entered, and abode for awhile;—and that now the spirit of John the Baptist has taken the place of that of Elijah. And therefore I may justly be considered, and am, in fact, and to all intents and purposes, John the Baptist.

Here a somewhat general conversation ensued—Mr. Hervey urging upon the deluded man the absurdity of his conduct and pretensions. Among other matters, Mr. Hervey inquired why he disfigured himself by suffering his beard to grow thus.

Mr. Pierson. Jesus Christ wore a long beard when upon earth, and we are commanded to follow his example in all things.

After pursuing the conversation for some minutes, Mr. Hervey, turning to Mr. M. H. S., inquired:—

"Do you really pretend to say that you have under this roof a being who styles himself Shiloh?"

M. H. S. The very self-same being, sir, and who has told me all things that ever I did. But you shall see and judge for yourself, sir.

Saying which, he left the apartment and ascended the stairs in the hall. Returning presently, he said:—

"Prepare yourself to receive him who was the first and the last—the great I AM!"

A noise of footsteps moving slowly across the floor above was now heard, from whence the sounds descended the stairs, and some person entered the back parlour, communicating with the front by folding-doors.

M. H. S. Let us rise, and prepare for his reception.

No sooner said than done: and the folding-doors being at the same instant thrown open by a servant stationed on the other side for that purpose, behold, there stood a being of whose appearance some idea may perhaps be formed from the description already attempted to be given. "Figure to yourself," says Mr. Hervey, "a full-sized man, with a full head of hair, parted over the top, and falling down in clustering curls over his shoulders; a long beard, extending down his breast, midway of his body, and covering nearly the whole of his face to the eyes, which were small and sunken, but sharp and piercing." He had on a bottle-green frock-coat of the finest quality; white pantaloons and waistcoat; with a broad crimson sash, richly inwrought with gold, around his body. To this were suspended the twelve golden tassels already described, and he wore ruffles around his wrists. This singular figure approached with a very slow and majestic step, and proffered his hand to the stranger, but from which the latter withdrew, saying:—

"No, sir; excuse me, if you please. If you

are what you pretend to be, I am certainly not worthy to take you by the hand—"

M. H. S. Bravo! (flying into his embrace and kissing him.)

Mr. Hervey. But stop: I had not finished my sentence. If you are not what you pretend to be, sir, then you are not worthy to take me by the hand.

At this turn of the period, there was some confusion. John the Baptist kept his seat with the most imperturbable composure, but M. H. S. uttered some ejaculations of surprise at the indignity with which his Shiloh was treated, that are not retained. The prophet drew himself up with dignity, and frowned for an instant as he supposed with terror. Presently however, the gathering storm passed away, and Shiloh, M. H. S., and Mr. Hervey seated themselves together upon the sofa—upon which lay an open Bible.

Mr. Hervey commenced a conversation by putting a question to him touching his pretensions, and desiring to know whether they were willing to enter into a discussion as to the truth of his assumptions —adding, that he knew of no other standard of truth, than that blessed volume (pointing to the Bible).

The Prophet. In my presence there is no other speaker than myself; and if a plurality of speakers is necessary, I shall at once leave the room.

Mr. Hervey. I have come here for discussion, rather than for information. My religious principles

are fixed; and my faith, and all my hopes of future salvation, are derived from that sacred volume.

M. H. S. The being in whose presence you are was present when that Bible was made; of course it must be taken for granted that he understands its doctrines better than any of us do.

Finding, however, very soon, that there was to be no discussion, and discovering, by repeated attempts, that it was almost impossible to get in a word edgewise, yet desirous of hearing something from the oracle, Mr. Hervey contented himself to remain for a short time a silent listener.

The prophet thereupon began a discussion, pouring forth a tissue of greater absurdities than can well be conceived—mingled with shocking blasphemies. There were, to be sure, occasionally, quotations from the Scriptures, the Old Testament in particular, and chiefly from the writings of Moses, fluently cited in support of his pretensions, and sometimes adroitly. But there was so much of wickedness and nonsense mixed up in his harangue,—with now and then a few grains of sense among his crudities—that Mr. Hervey's patience became exhausted. The whole performance was disgusting from its profanity, and the ignorance of the impostor, notwithstanding his familiarity with the language of Scripture, too disgusting indeed, for repetition. One or two of his assertions will be cited for examples. For instance, he declared that on the 9th of July, 1836, time should be no more; that the consummation of all things would take place; that the Gentiles would all be damned, and none but the Jews be saved.

Mr Hervey. But how is that? If so, and such is to be the fate of all the Gentiles, our friends M. H. S. and Pierson, here, are after all to be damned!

M. H. S. Oh! but I am a Jew!

Mr. Hervey. A Jew! how is that?

The Prophet. Why, several generations since, one of his ancestors married a Jewess, and he has therefore sufficient Jewish blood running in his veins to save him.

M. H. S. And as to Pierson, as you call him, you forget that he is John the Baptist, and is therefore a Jew of course.

The oration having been thus interrupted, was not resumed; but, during its utterance, both the host and Pierson seemed to drink in every word of it, with as much eagerness as though the impostor's lips had really been touched with the live coal from the altar; as though his incoherent ravings were in truth the words of more than mortal tongue. Indeed, it was the custom of these two disciples to sit hour upon hour, and day after day, gazing with rapture on the countenance of their prophet, and rolling every sentence he uttered as a sweet morsel under their tongues. One of them would kiss his feet in token of reverence and humility.* "Look there!"

* Washing the prophet's feet, and also each other's, by his followers, was common among them. The following entries upon this subject are from Pierson's diary:—

May 5th, 1832. Washed R. Matthias's feet.

Nov. 10*th*. Washed Michael H. B——'s feet.

Dec. 15*th*, *evening*. The Lord directed me to have my feet washed. Mrs. B—— and Isabella also washed each other's,

said S. to a friend at his house, one day; "did you notice the hair upon his upper lip, how it looks like a lion! I tell you sir, he is a lion—he is the lion of the tribe of Judah!"

It was now past six o'clock; and it was moreover a day on which the twelve apostles were to partake of their love-feast—for which purpose the table was now spreading in another apartment. Mr. Hervey was invited to remain and partake—Mr. M. H. S. assuring him that he should positively sup with the twelve Apostles. But the invitation was declined. Having seen and heard enough to satisfy his curiosity, Mr. Hervey then took his departure—adding, emphatically, in conclusion—"that by such proceedings, they were assuming responsibilities which he would not bear for worlds." He recommended them to search the Scriptures; for therein they would find that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby they can be saved, but the name of Jesus; and he hoped, that, one and all, they would yet be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Him. He then departed, resolving within himself, as soon as an opportunity should offer, to warn these deluded men to be on their guard against the arts and designs of this wicked impostor. Events, however, soon conspired to prevent such another interview with Mr. Pierson and his companion in the delusion, as he desired to procure; and his purpose was frustrated.

After this was done, prayed with them, and ate supper, breaking the bread. It was a very solemn time, and the Lord was there The Lord gave good promises respecting Mrs. B—— and Isabella.

Another gentleman, who dined several times with the disciple of Matthews, at whose house the scene just described took place in company with the prophet, and whose lectures he also attended at the same place on two or three occasions, has furnished the writer with a few particulars. At the time of his first invitation, he was not apprized that he was to meet any extraordinary personage. But on his arrival at the house of his friend, he was gently admonished thus: "You will not be afraid of a long beard, I trust."—"Oh no, not at all," replied the gentleman. "But why do you make such a remark?" He replied, in substance, that the Almighty was under his roof, and that he was to dine with him. The guest being aware that his host had been labouring under strong and peculiar religious excitement, turned the remark by saying that he should be glad to see him, or words equivalent.

The gentleman referred to informs the writer that the discourses which he heard were delivered with not a little pathos, to some fifty or sixty persons, male and female, and that at times he displayed considerable ingenuity. Upon one occasion, he enumerated about a dozen classes of persons, against whom, he said, the same denunciation would be pronounced at the *day of judgment.* One of which was merchant tailors, who hired women at four shillings a week: the denunciation would be, "*Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not.*" This was repeated in a stentorian voice, at the naming of each class. In the same discourse, he said, that

whosoever offended John the Baptist, (pointing to Mr. Pierson and calling him by name), or *my beloved son* (pointing to the gentleman of the house, and naming him), I pronounce a curse upon him, and it will take effect: but whoever applies, in good faith and sincerity of heart, to John the Baptist, he will hand him over to me, and *I will insure him a seat in heaven.*

"Upon these occasions," adds the gentleman, "the prophet was decorated with a superb palla or robe, from different parts of which were suspended twelve large silk tassels, said to be intended to typify the twelve tribes of Israel. He was begirded round the waist with the elegant red silk sash heretofore spoken of. These, with a reverential flowing beard, from six to eight inches in length, such as the ancient saints used to wear, gave him a very imposing appearance. At table he was served with a silver goblet, while the rest of the company were furnished with common glass tumblers. Nothing, however, was drunk at dinner but water. In short, the whole affair was conducted with decorum, and well calculated to impress upon the minds of the ignorant and superstitious the reality of the character assumed by the principal actor in the farce."

Having heard much of the increasing extravagances of his unhappy friend, and of his recent connection with a man believed universally to be a base impostor, Mr. Pierson's former pastor resolved upon one more effort to visit, and, if possible, to reclaim him. He repaired to his house, therefore, with great anxiety. On his entrance, his sur-

prise and astonishment were unbounded at beholding him. When he had last seen him, from long and frequent fastings, he had become almost wasted to a skeleton; but the appearance of his person now betokened any thing rather than abstemiousness in diet. His beard, which was coal-black, now almost covered his face, and his eye had acquired an uncommon lustre, a piercing and almost startling fierceness of expression, as it flashed through his raven locks. His prophet, Matthias, was with him at the time, with a yet much longer beard, and dressed in his pontifical robes, as heretofore described. There was likewise another gentleman present, on a visit of curiosity to the extraordinary pair.

After a pause of a few moments, the prophet broke silence by speaking, as though in continuation of a discourse. He spoke without method, —raved against all denominations of Christians,— declaring that the kingdom he was preaching, and which had now commenced, would continue and increase, until, like Aaron's rod, it should have swallowed up all other sects and kindreds. He proceeded in an attempt to explain his system, which was crude and unintelligible. He maintained not only that the earth was to be renovated, but that the spirits of the Apostles and patriarchs were to reanimate other bodies. At present, he and John the Baptist (Pierson), were obliged to fill a variety of offices; but in a short time men would arise to occupy the different posts, so that there should again be twelve apostles, and twelve patriarchs, and other functionaries answering to the early ages of the

church. This era was to be the first resurrection. He commented with satisfaction upon the rail-roads projected and in progress, as preparing the way of the Lord, regretting, however, that they were not more continuous and regular in their courses. At that time the sea was to be converted into dry land; people were not to dwell in cities, but would live, as it were, in palaces scattered over the land, riding in elegant carriages, and dressing and living in wealth and splendour. He denounced baptism by sprinkling, declaring moreover that immersion was no baptism, as the rite was practised, because people were baptized with their clothes on.

Among other of his vagaries, he declared that he had received in a vision the plan of architecture for the New Jerusalem, which he was commissioned to build, and which, for the magnificence and beauty of its structure—for its extent and grandeur—would excel all that was known of the Greeks and Romans. The site of this great capital of the kingdom, was to be in the western part of New-York. The bed of the ocean was to yield up its long-concealed treasures for his use. All the vessels, tools, and implements of this New Jerusalem, were to be of massive silver and pure gold. In the midst of the city was to stand an immense temple, in comparison with which that of Solomon could not be named; and this principal temple was to be surrounded by several smaller ones. In the greater temple he himself was to be enthroned. Pierson and M. H. S. were to occupy each a lesser throne, on his right hand and on his left. Before him was to stand an

altar on which was to be placed a massive candlestick, with seven branches—all of pure gold. Candlesticks of iron were to stand on the altar before his two lesser divinities, already mentioned. He continued his rhapsody for about ten minutes longer, with great violence of speech and gesture, frequently raising his shrill and harsh voice to the top of his lungs.

Having concluded his harangue, the clergyman then requested of Mr. Pierson liberty to speak—to which the prophet instantly objected, adding, that they wanted no teachers there, and that all who came must be content to learn. Mr. Pierson was then again asked—"Is this not your own house? May I not be permitted to speak?"

With some reluctance, and looking with fear and trembling at his master, Mr. Pierson then consented, and the gentleman proceeded affectionately to admonish him against consorting with such a man, of whom there could be no doubt that he was a gross impostor. He therefore warned his old friend to abandon him at once, and repent of the errors into which he had fallen.

Mr. Pierson, who, with his spiritual instructor, was sitting upon the sofa, here interposed by saying that he could not allow such language to be uttered in his house against so holy a man. The prophet, however, was not satisfied with the gentle rebuke of John the Baptist; but springing upon his feet in a passion, he raised his arms perpendicularly, and rushed furiously towards the gentleman—shrieking wildly at the highest pitch of his voice. He raved incohe-

rently, and with such loudness and half-suffocated rage, as to prevent his words from being understood —further than that he continued to protest against allowing any person to come there to teach him. So violent was his manner as to intimidate poor Pierson, who trembled like an aspen-leaf.

Being now convinced that no good was to be accomplished by remaining longer, the gentleman departed from the truly melancholy scene—extending his hand to Mr. Pierson on leaving, from which, however, the deluded man shrunk back, as though every finger had been pointed with the sting of a scorpion.

The idea of this New Jerusalem, which was to adorn western New-York with its gorgeous palaces and solemn temples, was a frequent subject of the prophet's discourses, and was fully believed in by his disciples. As a matter of course, the furniture was to correspond with its external grandeur. For the purpose, therefore, of making some preliminary preparations, while yet residing with Mr. M. H. S., in the summer of 1832, Matthews, in company with this gentleman, called at the large and amply finished fancy store of Mr. Gardiner, in Broadway, to examine the fashion and style of his silver-wares. After taking a general survey of the articles for which they had inquired—of massive silver, richly embossed, and many of them with exquisite skill—they remarked that the plate would not answer their purpose at all. On being interrogated in what respect the articles—which were of the most fashionable patterns—were defective, they replied that "it

was now the reign of THE LION!" and that every piece must be surmounted with that noble animal. They also advised Mr. Gardiner to dispose of his stock in trade as soon as possible, and commence the manufacture of articles of the pattern they had described, as none other would in a short time be in demand. It was then asked whether it was the *British lion* they wanted? To which Matthews answered, No; for the British lion was a devil; but he meant "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah.*" He then proceeded to say that he was authorized to contract for the building of a magnificent temple, which was soon to be commenced, and of which all the utensils were to be of gold and silver. This temple was to exceed in splendour all that could be pictured forth to the imagination; and with a view to furnishing the vessels and utensils of silver and gold, it would be wise for Mr. Gardiner to engage all the best artificers in the world, for that all would be wanted.

In the course of a week or ten days afterward, Mr. M. H. S. called alone, and after the ordinary exchange of salutations, observed—"Mr. Gardiner, the Kingdom of God is at hand, are you not glad of it?" Mr. Gardiner having signified his assent to this proposition, the gentleman proceeded to make inquiries respecting the silver-ware, desiring also to consult him as to certain alterations and engravings, which he wished to have executed upon his own family plate. He produced several pieces, on which he wished various inscriptions to be made—one of which was—"The kingdom of God is at hand;"

but the others are not recollected. Remonstrances that such inscriptions would only disfigure his silver were made to no purpose. On the day following he called again, accompanied by a servant, laden with a basket of silver-ware, containing various articles, among which was a tea-set. His directions were, that a silver lion be placed upon the top of the tea-pot, the sugar-bowl, &c., and also, that the spout of the former should be ornamented with a lion's head, from the mouth of which the tea should be poured. The alterations and engravings having been made as directed, he then ordered a silver chalice, with two inscriptions, one of which was, that it was presented to the prophet Matthias by himself and children.

He frequently called at the store afterward, sometimes in company with Matthias, and at others without him. At length he gave an order for a porcelain dinner service, to have the device of the lion, and the inscriptions already upon his plate ; but the order was on so large a scale that the merchant was unwilling to execute it. Suspecting, moreover, by this time, what was the state of the gentleman's mind, he consulted with some of his friends, and determined not to execute the order, but at the same time to humour him as far as he could, when he called, as he frequently did, to make inquiries for the articles. At a subsequent visit Matthias commenced one of his flighty and boisterous orations—boasting of his supernatural endowments, and talking largely of his power to save or destroy. One of his conceits was, that he could destroy all the

flies in the world as easily as "that"—rapping his fingers upon a box by which he was standing. This insect was particularly offensive to him; and one of the comforts of "his kingdom" was to consist in the cleanliness of the houses, which were to be kept with such neatness that the flies would be unable to live in them.

Matters having proceeded thus with Mr. M. H. S. for about three months, some of his friends, finding that both Matthews and himself required to be taken care of, procured a warrant, setting forth that, "by reason of lunacy, or otherwise, they were so far disordered in their senses as to endanger their persons, or the persons and property of others, if permitted to go at large." On this warrant, the gentleman referred to was sent to the Bloomingdale lunatic asylum, and Matthews to the apartment of the insane poor at Bellevue. It having been suggested to the brother of one of his disciples, that the secret of the prophet's power over his infatuated followers, like the strength of Samson, lay in his hair, means were found to set the Philistines of the police upon him, and he was shorn of his favourite beard—a bereavement which he greatly lamented. A brother of the impostor, hearing of his confinement, procured a writ of *habeas corpus*, upon which he was brought before the Recorder, and after a hearing discharged. He was immediately arrested, however, on a charge of blasphemy, but was admitted to bail, having encountered no difficulty in procuring sureties. No trial upon this charge took place.

While a resident with Mr. M. H. S. he was very

boisterous and noisy in his preaching—to such an extent that the neighbours complained, and measures were projected to abate the nuisance. It is not known what were his private habits at this time, but suspicions of gross licentiousness were entertained, in consequence of the visits of females to his apartments. With some of these he became angry, and one or more of them was severely whipped by him. It is not supposed that the gentleman whose hospitality he was at once enjoying and so greatly abusing, was at all cognizant of any such proceedings, or of his supposed licentiousness. After the arrest, however, papers were discovered on the premises, by which it was ascertained that Matthews had been projecting a match between Mr. M. H. S. and his daughter, whom he had left at Albany, and whose name will subsequently appear in the present history as Mrs. Laisdell. She was to have been brought from Albany for that purpose.

Not more than six weeks had elapsed after the removal of this gentleman to Bloomingdale, before he looked upon the impostor with detestation.

"He is a devil," he exclaimed one day in conversation with a friend.

"How do you know him to be such?" was the reply.

"Because God has told me so."

"Because God has told you so! How do you know that?"

"How do I know? There can be no mistake upon the subject. He is the devil, 'the real crittur'—the monster himself. God tells me so. Why,

God talks to me every day, as a parent does to a child."

Upon this subject of direct communication with the Spirit, and of interviews with the departed, this gentleman seemed to have imbibed the same delusion which Mr. Pierson had acquired from Mrs. * * *, by whose agency, or through whose instrumentality, all the evils we have been describing, were beyond all question superinduced. Both his wife and father had recently deceased, and he frequently related the interviews he was in the habit of holding with them. His father, in particular, was in the habit of calling in upon him often, in a sociable manner, and holding long and agreeable conversations with him.

He was much pleased with his residence at the Asylum—with its noble edifice, its beautiful grounds, and the glorious landscape in the midst of which it is so delightfully situated. His opinion seemed to be, that it was a branch of the New Jerusalem of his day-dreams, and that hereafter gentlemen were to live in large communities, and grand establishments like that. As to the present inmates, however, he did not believe they were men, but rather that they were devils. These vagaries clearly show, that the interposition of his friends, to rescue him from the toils of Pierson and Matthews, had not been taken too soon.

After his release upon the *habeas corpus*, as already related, Matthews was again received into the house of Mr. Pierson, with whom he enjoyed a hospitable home until October—at which time his be-

nevolent disciple rented and furnished a house for his exclusive use, in Clarkson-street, where, with the noted Isabella for his housekeeper, he resided until the following May (1833).

This change was dictated, as Mr. Pierson supposed, by the Holy Spirit, in the words following, which are taken from his diary :—

Oct. 3. Mr. Matthias shall go from you, and you shall go on with your work, and be prospered, and have every needed gift and wisdom.

His intercourse with Mr. Pierson was kept up as usual during the winter; but in regard to his life and conduct at what was emphatically now his own home, there is no certain information. He was much in the streets as before, and frequently preached from his own door to the people occasionally collecting for amusement around it. Whenever he became irritated with Isabella, however, in regard to household or other matters, he would remain at home, and preach to her the whole day.

The papers of Mr. Pierson during this period, furnish but little information in respect either to his temporal or spiritual affairs. The general state of his mind remained much the same, however, as will be seen by the following extracts :—

Sunday, 24th March, 1833. After breakfast, the Spirit said, go up stairs and pray: whatsoever you ask, shall be granted.

Prayed for a clean heart and a right spirit to be renewed in me; for power over all the power of the enemy: to tread on serpents and scorpions: to be filled with godlike wisdom—for all the gifts and graces of body and mind Jesus had for the performance of his ministry; gift of prophecy (preaching): that

my captivity might be turned like that of Job: to be raised high above all my enemies, and the fear of man: that the people might hear me as preparing the way of the Lord as John the Baptist: that I might baptize them according to the will of God.

April 9th, 1833. In the night had a view of my ew body. I appeared taller than I am now, very ruddy and fair, with no beard except under the chin, full of animation and sprightliness. There was something said about the tall young man spoken of by Esdras.

At the close of April, the prophet's establishment was broken up, and he took lodgings at the lower extremity of the city, in the hotel corner of Market-field and West streets. The cause of this change in his domestic arrangements is not exactly known. A strong inference may be drawn, however, from the following entry in Mr. Pierson's diary a month before :—

Monday, March 18, 1833. While meditating concerning supplying Mr. M. with a monthly supply, the spirit said, "give him no more, he has disobeyed me, and thou shalt give him no more at all. This word is sure unto thee, saith the Lord that heareth thee.

The within injunction was made in the most unqualified terms, and repeated. One point of disobedience appeared to be about the watch. It was said, thou hast obeyed my voice, therefore I will bless thee above men.

There must be no change of this determination. The Lord requires it so.

An additional reason for supposing that a misunderstanding had arisen between the prophet and his disciple, is found in the fact, that during the three or four months of his boarding at the before-mentioned hotel, he was evidently but ill-supplied with money. His custom was to pay his reckonings

daily, whenever he had the means; but there were occasional periods of three or four days, when he was entirely destitute, and his wardrobe seemed to be less amply furnished with new garments, than during the preceding summer.

The contiguity of his present quarters to the Battery enabled him to indulge himself to the full in walks upon that beautiful esplanade; and on returning to the hotel, he was certain to be followed by a portion of the crowd, who, from motives of curiosity, or to annoy him with questions, or irritate him by contradictions, would be sure to remain so long in the bar-room as enabled the landlord to find his account in it. As to the general deportment of Matthews during this period, it is not represented as having been particularly obnoxious to censure. On his first introduction to the hotel, he attempted once or twice to play off his prophetical airs, and display his boisterous oratory. But the landlord perfectly understood him, and being withal a man of energy, he soon took the conceit out of him, and subsequently had no trouble with him. The frequenters of the bar-room would occasionally exasperate him, and in return he would pour forth a torrent of curses upon them; but whenever the landlord perceived that he was likely to proceed too far, he would step up and say to him, "Mr. Matthias, it is time for you to go to bed." The intimation was sufficient, and he would obey it from that source with the docility of a child. Justice also requires it to be said, that so far as is known or believed, his moral conduct while residing at the Battery, was irreproachable.

Whether there had actually been a quarrel between the prophet and his disciple, it has already been said, is not known. But if it were so, it will shortly appear that the differences between them were not lasting. Meantime, in conclusion of the present chapter, as we have done with Mr. Pierson's recorded conversations with the Deity, it is proper to state the explanation which he gave of the manner in which those conversations were held. He maintained indeed that God spoke audibly to him; but on being asked, how it happened, that if God spoke thus to him, no other persons could hear him? he replied, that it was not exactly a voice which he heard, but words were in some mysterious manner communicated to him, which he was enabled to hear though they could not be heard by others.

CHAPTER VII.

History of Mr. and Mrs. Folger resumed—Commencement of their acquaintance with Matthias—Pierson's instructions—Efforts of Matthias to bring Mr. Folger into his power—Throws himself upon the family of Mr. F. at Singsing uninvited—Mr. and Mrs. Folger's narrative of the circumstances—Dreams, and Visions, and Vagaries of the Prophet, in which the Reader will find more of ingenuity than he expects—His discourse with Adam—Claims Divine Attributes and the Authorship of the Bible—Strange notions about the transmigration of the Spirit of Truth—Vision of the Indian—New Theory of Sickness—Diet and general manner of living at Mount Zion—Cruel treatment of Mrs. Folger in Sickness—Bathing—Refutation of Calumnies upon that Subject—Daniel's Image of Gold, and Gen. Jackson's falling from the Bridge at Castle Garden an Evil omen to his Successor—Gift of the Holy Ghost conferred upon Pierson—Explanations of the Prophet's attire—The Chariot of Israel—The Prophet's notions respecting marriage—Re-marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Folger by Mr. Pierson—And again by the Prophet—Internal description of the household of Mount Zion—Journey to Albany for the family of Matthias—Whipping of his Daughter—Whips the sick Devil out of Isabella—Discipline of his own Family—Mount Zion given to the Prophet—Mr. Folger's Bankruptcy—A Catastrophe with a Coach—Mr. Folger doubts the Prophet—Rupture—Seizes him by the Throat—Reconciliation—Sickness and Death of Mr. Pierson—Removal to New-York—The Delusion passes away—Matthias driven away—End of the Narrative.

THUS far the reader will have perceived that Mr. Benjamin H. Folger and his wife had had no connection or acquaintance with the pretended Prophet, into whose toils they were ultimately doomed to fall. They had indeed early been the victims of the lady (Mrs. * * *), with whom commenced the infatuation that in the end was productive of such disastrous results—an infatuation engendered in fanaticism, and running into an almost unheard of delusion;—and

hey had, moreover, been associated with that lady and Mr. Pierson in most of their memorable proceedings at Bowery Hill; but they had hitherto escaped the fellowship of the impostor, for whose appearance the way had been so admirably prepared. But the glance of the pretended Shiloh had singled them out for his prey, and they seem to have had no more power of escape than the charmed bird from the glittering folds of the serpent.

During the summer of 1832, Mr. Pierson had made frequent efforts to procure the attendance of Mr. Folger upon the preaching of Matthias, by repeated calls at his place of business, and also by letter. But, as has already been stated, Mr. Folger's affairs required his attention in the interior, and he did not return with his family to the city until the close of September. The only knowledge which at that time he possessed of Matthias, had been derived from Mr. Pierson's letters, and the newspaper accounts of his arrest and confinement, as detailed in the preceding chapter. Having determined to form no definite opinion respecting him until after their return to the city, nor even then from mere hearsay and rumour, they early sought an interview with Mr. Pierson. Of that interview, and its consequences, and the history of their subsequent acquaintance with the impostor himself, and the manner in which he wrought upon their credulity, and subverted for a time their understandings, they will be allowed to speak for themselves, in the following narrative, which they have prepared at the solicitation of the writer. The insertion of this narrative, nearly entire, is due

to Mr. and Mrs. Folger in justice; and it is submitted with the assurance that the writer has reason to repose entire confidence in the veracity of this extraordinary narration. The writer thinks, moreover, that it is not only an act of justice to Mr. and Mrs. Folger to give their statement, but that the reader will consider it very far from being the least interesting and extraordinary portion of this extraordinary history. The occurrences at Singsing (or Mount Zion, as the place was called), with the exception of that part which had, or was supposed to have, a direct and immediate reference to the death of Mr. Pierson, have never been made known to the public; and saving Mrs. Folger and the impostor himself, there is none living by whom they can be told. Various stories have indeed been circulated, but in these there is great exaggeration and much absolute falsehood; we repeat that we have implicit confidence in the relation of Mr. and Mrs. Folger. The mystery that has hitherto brooded on these transactions exists no longer.

"At the close of September we went to town, determined upon an interview with Mr. Pierson. We called upon him—found him with a beard about an inch long—and learned from him that Mr. M—— was in the Lunatic Asylum, and that Mr. Matthias had been thrown into prison, but was again an inmate of his house. We inquired of Mr. Pierson respecting the newspaper statements, and he replied that they were very incorrect. He censured us much for being out of the way, and said that we had

met with a loss which we might not be able to regain. Mr. Pierson then told us that he had found a man in the person of Matthias much farther advanced in the truth than himself. We told Mr. Pierson it was the general impression abroad that he (Mr. Pierson) was deranged. He answered that he was aware of it, and regarded it as his protection from confinement—but that he had the truth, and Matthias was much in advance of him in the knowledge of truth—that Matthias was to be *his* teacher, and he *ours*, and we must acknowledge him as such.

"We had a long interview with Mr. Pierson, in the course of which he forbade us going any more to church or to prayer-meetings, as all these were to be broken up; and we were farther ordered to dismiss our Sabbath-school. It is proper to mention here, that we had obtained the use of a school-house, near our residence in the country, which Mr. Folger occupied for the male school, and which was filled to overflowing—we had several good teachers and assistants from the immediate neighbourhood. The female school was held in our house, under the care of Mrs. Folger, assisted by several ladies from the vicinity. Mrs. Folger was instructed to listen to no teacher but her husband, and in no case to preach or teach herself, as all female preaching was now to be considered unlawful. Mr. Folger was told to teach his own household.

"We were told to discontinue communing with the church, as we must not taste wine until we drank it anew with Jesus in the Kingdom, and that the

new wine was to be found in the cluster; and he (Mr. Pierson) referred us to many passages of Scripture, and told us to go home and search if these things were not so. We did search—had difficulty in reconciling many points—reported them to Mr. Pierson, and he would from time to time explain and make it all clear. We soon had difficulty with the church—stated that we wished to retire—the church called us before them, and after much painful debate, we withdrew entirely on the 4th of July, 1833.

"We had many interviews with Mr. Pierson, both at his, and our own residence, between October, 1832, and July, 1833, and by this time had become converts to the doctrines of Matthias, as taught by Mr. Pierson, so far as we could understand them. But in all our interviews we were told there was much more to learn which was valuable; but that minds so established in the errors of Christianity could not be easily overcome, and should be dealt with accordingly."

Such were the instructions they received from Mr. Pierson, and such the first fruits in this commencement of their pupilage under the first and greatest disciple of the prophet. But during this period, the prophet himself was not idle, as we learn from a deposition of Mr. Folger, afterward made as the basis of judicial proceedings. In that deposition, Mr. Folger, the deponent, stated, that he first became acquainted with Matthews at Pierson's house, at the period above mentioned; that Mr. Pierson,

at the time of the deponent's introduction to Matthias, professed, and appeared to believe sincerely, that the representations of Matthias as to himself and his divine character were true, and so represented them to deponent; who, from his confidence in Pierson, was prepared to place confidence in the assertions of Matthews. That these assertions were to the effect that he, Matthews, was the Spirit of Truth, which had disappeared from the earth at the death of Matthias mentioned in the New Testament, but had returned in him; that he was that same Matthias, risen from the dead, and animated by the Spirit of God. That Matthias, the apostle of the New Testament, was animated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ; but that he, Matthews, in this his second coming, was animated by the Spirit of God the Father. That he was himself God the Father, and had power to do all things; to forgive sins, and to communicate the Holy Ghost to such as believed in him. That Matthews called upon him, the deponent, from time to time, at his place of business, and that in their interviews there, and in other places, Matthews always made the same assertions respecting his own character and person: that on one occasion, to illustrate his supernatural or divine power, Matthews placed a sheet of paper in a drawer, which he then closed in such a manner as to leave a portion of the sheet exposed, and said to deponent, "*You* see but one end of this sheet of paper, which is outside of the drawer, but *I* see the whole of it—I see the end—and thus I see the end of all things." That he, the deponent, became fully

convinced of the truth of Matthews's assertions, and looked up to him with reverence as the impersonation of the Almighty, and this belief was also shared by deponent's wife; and, as a consequence, they also believed that it was their duty to supply all his wants, and obey all his injunctions. That Matthews represented himself to be poor, in want of money, and persecuted by the world, which was under the influence of the devil; that he had commenced the kingdom of God upon earth, into which Mills and Pierson had been called, but the permanent establishment of which was defeated and prevented for a time by the devil, whom he was now about to overcome; for which purpose it was the duty of deponent to contribute a portion of his substance, under penalty of being visited with the displeasure of the Almighty. Obedience in all things, he said, would be rewarded with forgiveness of sins and eternal happiness. That he, deponent, believing these representations, furnished Matthews with such moneys as he required from time to time, in different amounts. Such was the substance of the deposition referred to, so far as relates to the earlier part of their acquaintance with the prophet. The narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Folger is now resumed:—

"About the 20th of August, 1833, on our return (Mr. and Mrs. Folger) from a short visit to New-York, we found Matthias at our residence. He had been there two days. He was an unexpected visiter, but we soon heard from his own lips an account of his sufferings for the cause of truth, as he

termed it; and our minds having been prepared by Mr. Pierson's instructions, with the oft repeated caution not to reject him when he did come, but to receive him in the character he announced himself—that it was as dangerous to reject truth as to receive error—referring us to the words contained in Exodus, twenty-third chapter, commencing with the twentieth verse, and including the twenty-second—the way, we repeat, being thus prepared, we invited him to stay over the Sabbath, expecting him to leave us on Monday afternoon following.

* * * * *

"He said, that at his birth there was a light, above the brightness of the sun. In the course of his narrative, he stated his remarkable exercises and visions, only a part of which will be given, to show that there was a foundation and system in his religion, as it was presented to us, and more of plausibility than we are willing to have published, however much we are, or may be, censured and ridiculed for weakness. We entertain now the same respect for the cause of religion that we did previous to our acquaintance with Mrs. ***, Mr. Pierson, or the impostor Matthias. Every thing we have done, notwithstanding the loathsome scandal heaped upon us by the unprincipled, has been done under full conviction that we were doing right, and it is not probable that our destruction will be entirely accomplished, notwithstanding the efforts to that end.

"Matthias told us of the miracles he had wrought, and of the acknowledgments of his power from time

to time—that he attained this power by his obedience to the Spirit of Truth, in which he ventured far, regardless of the persecution that followed him, and by this means he obtained the power of discerning the Spirits, of which there were many.

"After much preaching against all intemperance, in obedience to the true Spirit, he saw in a vision a vast extent of surface, covered with something resembling smoke or steam. He blew it away—was commended by the Spirit, and was shown a great red sea, which was called the sea of intemperance—a vice which he had gone farther to subdue than any other person—but that it had since become a popular cause. He was then shown the veil of the temple, as it was rent by Jesus, and he had the courage, which was very pleasing to the Spirit, to look in—and he saw many things which we could not bear to know yet.

"In recounting his sufferings, he mentioned having been thrown into several prisons, and had suffered it to be so for wise purposes. Once, in obedience to the Spirit, he went into a church in Argyle, and told the minister before his people, that he was preaching falsehood, and wherein; and that he had come to take away his commission. He was seized and thrown into prison, but the Spirit was with him, to teach and fit him for the work he had yet to accomplish. In that prison the spirit of man yielded to, and delivered him a cloven tongue, with the power to bless with the one, and to curse with the other; that since then the male spirit had not made any resistance, but the female spirit had never been

subdued—that he had discovered in those who felt or expressed opposition to him, whether in the person of a male or female, that they were actuated by a female spirit.

"One night, during his stay at Mr. ——'s house, just after he had retired to bed, *Adam appeared to him in person*;* and in a vision, all the witnesses of truth, from Adam to the then present time, appeared, to yield up their spirits to him, with all the knowledge they possessed, and acknowledged him as the resurrection, or a repository for their spirits, until he (Matthias), their aid, should prepare others to receive them. Adam said to Matthias—'You are the man I have been looking for.' He then gave him something about the size of an ordinary Bible, say eight inches in length, and three inches thick, full of seals; on one edge of which was a serpent; —this, Adam said, was the soul of man. With it he gave Matthias a sword, and told him that even then he would reject him if he did not destroy the serpent;—that he then cut it off with the sword, and declared, as Adam instructed him, 'that women should not rule their husbands in the kingdom he was about to set up.' Adam then told Matthias that since he had undertaken this work, he must suffer for his (Adam's) redemption; that the sufferings of Jesus had not reached his case; for that Jesus—the Son—could not redeem any over thirty-three years of age; that he (Matthias) then went

* Of this vision, Matthias had given Pierson an account the year before, as we discover by an entry in his diary—"May 25, 1832: R. Matthias had his exercises concerning Adam."—*Author.*

into a state of extreme suffering, and, as he judged, underwent the pains of hell, which lasted all night. When he came out of this state of suffering, Adam expressed himself highly satisfied, and vanished.

"Matthias then described himself as God, but in a manner which we could more easily convey verbally than in a written communication. He was a spirit when the world was a chaos. When he formed the dry land and the water, he diffused himself in the earth and water as spirit, and caused grass, plants, shrubs, and trees to spring up. He was in all these. He went on improving in all his work,—filling the waters with living things; and whatever of life, spirit, or animation there was in them was part of himself. He next made the insect and animal world, the last and noblest of which was the horse, and infused of his spirit into all.

"A portion of the substance of which he had formed all the animal world—even to the serpent—was retained to form man; but before he put his governing spirit into man, he took from him a bone, or rib, and formed woman. Then he caused his governing spirit, or infused himself into Adam, so that Adam was God, and being pleased with all things he had made, and standing so nearly related to them, he was disposed to exercise mercy and deal justly with all.

"He accounted for Adam's fall by stating that his governing spirit had retired to another part of the garden, or Eve could not have overcome him. It was not intended that the female should have any part of the governing spirit, for the man stood

always responsible for his wife, and was to guard her from every evil. In this instance, the governing spirit came in an audible voice and inquired of Adam what he had done.

"He said our ideas of God were very incorrect. He had brought about many changes, and tried many experiments in the world, and, although he was the source from which all wisdom came, yet he was increasing in wisdom continually. He gave us the course and occupation of his spirit from that time until Abraham's day, but it is too tedious to relate, and we are desirous of getting over the whole matter.

"The Bible was not laid aside by us, but it was regarded as the word of God. His (Matthias's) spirit wrote the original, and would give an idea of the order he meant to establish in the world. His governing spirit was in Abraham, and Abraham was then God. He ruled his household, educated his son himself, and was to be found in his tent-door, through which nothing could pass without his inspection to disquiet his family. He likewise stated the time and manner he, or the spirit he had received and then possessed, had originally written the Bible.

"He was well acquainted with the truths of the Scriptures,—the copy he brought with him as his own had evidently been much used,—it was much marked with pencil, had an old appearance, but had been well taken care of. He expressed violent indignation that his words should be printed on paper made of filthy rags, instead of being written on

parchment,—but the Gentiles had defiled every thing. They (the Gentiles) had not only omitted many portions of the word entirely, of which there is no mention in the Scriptures, but they had likewise omitted many books and portions spoken—such as the book of Jasher and Daniel's vision, which were sealed up with a promise that he should stand in his lot in the last days, and unseal them. Many of the Apostles' writings, he taught us, were missing. He undertook to give the contents of the little book that John ate, spoken of in Revelations, as well as all the missing parts of the Bible. He was also highly offended at the Gentiles for the addition to the Scriptures of the words that were in Italics.

"He undertook to explain many passages of Scripture that are mysterious: we instance one. It is written, 'No man shall see my face and live.' His explanation was, that Adam could only see all that was to be seen of God in his day; whoever received Adam's spirit at his death, could only see all that was to be seen of God with his bodily eyes in *his* day; so that it could not be that *any* man could see God's face and live until death was destroyed.

"Every husband and father should rule his own house. He taught that the man would be furnished with a governing spirit, and the power of endowing the wife with just enough for her station, and the children for theirs. Hence the necessity of withdrawing our children from school, as whoever teaches instils spirit into them, and, should they die, all the spirit they receive from this or that teacher,

in the way of instruction, would return from whence it came. This was termed the child's soul. It was desirable with us, therefore, that our children should partake of our spirit; and should they die before the enemy, death, was destroyed, their spirits would return to us, or, when we saw fit, which was altogether optional with us (whether we lived for ever or not), their bodies would be receptacles for our spirits.

"He continued to teach us the course of the Spirit of God from Abraham to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and all the prophets and apostles. It will be recollected that he received the spirits of all the witnesses of truth. He would describe the different scenes and sufferings they passed through, and state when the different spirits spoke by his mouth. He claimed to be the resurrection of all the holy characters spoken of in the Scriptures, possessing the right to rule the whole world. He declared, in God's own language, 'I am God, there is none else.' He ridiculed the idea of a heaven above, and explained much of the Scripture that we had not regarded as very important to us, such as the tabernacle in the wilderness, for which particular directions were given in the construction and furnishing, and which showed that God designed it for a dwelling-place for himself.

"The temple of Solomon was only a miniature of the one he was to build for himself, besides the house of many mansions for his people to dwell in. His plan for building these was the most complete and magnificent that can be imagined. We can-

not do justice to his description, but we should think his architectural taste must be good. There would be no want of means, as all the treasures of the earth would be his after the seven years had expired in 1837, which was the last hour of God's judgment.

"He explained another vision he had had. An Indian brought him a bundle of arrows, with something written upon each, such as 'Earthquakes,' 'Fires,' 'Floods,' 'Wars,' 'Famine,' &c., which was an acknowledgment to him of his right to commission others to execute these judgments when and where he pleased. He would sometimes foretell these calamities, and where and when they would occur, which tended to strengthen or increase our faith. On one occasion, he took a bundle of small cords, as he said Jesus had done when he overthrew the money changers, and it being in the time of the panic, it so happened that many merchants of long standing failed immediately after, and he thus again seemed to have something plausible in his pretensions. He hated traffic, and merchandise of all kinds, especially the sale of land, for the earth was our mother, and it was written, 'the land shall not be sold for ever.' Lev. xxv. 23.

"He gave us his plan for the temple. It was to be a great storehouse for people from all parts of the world to resort to, with the products of their labour. The farmer would till the earth to the best advantage, reserve only enough for his own support, and convey the surplus to the great storehouse—receive no pay, but get other things which he might need for

his family. The various mechanics, and indeed every class in society, were to employ the talents, of which there would be a more equal division—put the surplus of their labour in the storehouse, like the farmer, and receive what he needed: and in this way, the plan fully carried out, there would be no oppression. The priests would be what he ever intended they should be—the preachers of his Gospel, which consisted in *doing*, and not in *talking of doing*.* He instanced the messengers of John the Baptist to Jesus, with the question, 'Art thou he that should come,' and in the same hour Jesus cured many of their infirmities, plagues, and evil spirits, to many that were blind he gave sight, &c., and sent them to tell John what things they had seen and heard—that the poor had the gospel preached to them, indeed, and blessed were those who would not be offended in him. The priests, therefore, were to minister in the temple—taking charge, and ordering every thing—the Levites to furnish the people with food, clothing, &c., of which there would be an abundant supply.

"The seven years, before spoken of, would af-

* Upon this point, Mrs. Folger has related one of Matthias's propositions to the writer, which is not set down in the narrative. According to his belief, there are three classes of professional gentlemen, whom he calls black-coats and devils, and who are engaged in a conspiracy against the lives and property of men. These are the priests, the doctors, and the lawyers. The business of the first, he says, is to persuade men into a willingness to die; the doctor then steps in to help them out of the world; whereupon the lawyer makes his appearance to take possession of the estate. There is shrewdness, at least, in the conception; whether or no the shrewdness of insanity, the reader must determine for himself.—*Author.*

ford all those who had any *truth* an opportunity of recognising him in his official character, and of surrendering themselves and the property in their possession to him; but at this time, his judgments would all be poured out, and his agreement with the last enemy, *death*, would be at an end. He had made an agreement with death, or in other words, the devil, that he should be the God of this world for a time; but that time had nearly expired when he (the devil) was to submit to his destruction. He had not given him full power, but with what he had given him, the world was in a greater chaos than at the beginning; hence his reply to Jesus, as he was casting out devils, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time.'

"He taught that all sicknesses were detached spirits, from their head—death—as messengers to destroy these bodies, which were the work of God. We said to him that we had expected these bodies, and those of our kindred who had gone before, to rise again, as it was written that those who were in their graves should hear his voice, and those who slept in the dust should arise, but he soon dashed our hopes in this particular—our bodies were made of the dust, and formed graves for the spirits of those who had departed; for it would be found that many spirits are now asleep in the people, which will awake at his bidding to recognise him. These spirits had hitherto been with little children, but they could not now find rest there; the introduction of Infant-schools had completed the desolation spoken of by Daniel.

"In the Gentile system, a man's wife was decoyed by false teachers to prayer meetings and church—his older children scattered in different schools—and now, at last, to complete the ruin, the infant was committed to the care and teaching of strangers. This was contrary to God's plan. God had placed us on the earth in families, and his spirit was averse to any other plan. 'I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.' Jer. xxxi. 1.

"He gave other proofs upon this subject. He had never designed to raise those bodies that had yielded to death, for he had enjoined upon all to resist the devil and he should flee from them. No: —such were to be ashes under the soles of his feet, as found in the last of Malachi.

"Malachi was a favourite book with Mr. Pierson as well as Matthias. Mr. Pierson's given name was Elijah, and he thought himself to be that prophet Elijah, spoken of in Malachi, who was to be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord—whose office it will be to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest the Lord come and smite the earth with a curse.

"All diseases were termed *devils* by Matthias. A blind man was possessed by a blind devil—a lame one by a limping devil, and so on; those who were afflicted with deafness, toothache, headache, &c.—and all these he professed to have the power to cast out. Our family was remarkably preserved from sickness during his stay with us, but it

was no doubt owing principally to the healthy atmosphere in which we had lived for the last fifteen or eighteen months, the use of warm and cold baths, and a strict attention to diet, under the instruction of Doctor P****, one of the first physicians of New-York city. And even after Matthias came to reside with us, we continued to live plainly in our family.

"He would not allow any other than boiled meats. We were forbidden roast meats. Boiled fowls, fish, and vegetables, of the latter of which we were to have a greater variety than now in use. Our table was almost always supplied with rice, beans, potatoes, and onions, prepared in various ways. He did not allow pies or puddings, and but a few plain cakes. He was particularly fond of fresh fruits, and allowed us to eat them in any reasonable quantities. We were not, however, entirely exempted from sickness, but the least complaint drew forth his censure in so violent a manner, that we preferred to suffer in silence rather than expose ourselves to the visitation of his wrath.

"The least complaint would bring forth, in the utmost fury, the charge that we were bringing the devil into the house of God, and he would threaten with many curses, such as, shutting up in the bottomless pit,—annihilation,—or, if we would thus encourage the devil, we should be subjects of disease or leprosy. If this was our choice, he would let loose all the plagues upon us, but as for his house, they should choose, with Joshua, to serve the Lord. After hearing one of these bursts of

curses and threatenings, we sometimes felt that our case was quite hopeless. Seeing our state, he would say he could deliver us if we would ask him; —we did ask him, and he would bid the evil spirit depart with a very loud voice, and we often imagined it did depart, when we felt delivered from the curses that were likely to be inflicted.

"On one occasion in the absence of Mr. Folger, in the winter of 1834, Mrs. Folger was taken sick, but she was required to attend to her household duties as though she was well—she was not allowed to complain, but censured with savage severity because she looked ill. Her fever and distress, however, increased to such degree, that she could no longer keep about—and then he indulged in threats of torment, &c., but she was so ill as to be indifferent to them—in the excess of her pain she put a little quilt on the back of a high chair to lean her head against, but even this was seized by Matthias, as soon as observed, and taken from her. She was denied any food whatsoever, but not craving it, she supposes that abstinence from food, a supply of coffee, which he saw fit at last to allow her, with the bathing of her feet in warm water, produced the effect, with the blessing of the true God, to break her fever. She often looked to Mr. Pierson, who saw her treatment, and he told her to be *strong*—that there was no doubt that this was the way—and would often encourage her with assurances that we were right and had the truth.

"We had long been in the practice, by the advice of our physician before named, of using warm and

cold baths, and we continued them after Matthias and his children, and the servants introduced by him, came into the family. It no doubt was beneficial to our health, and we believe that Matthias was himself satisfied of the fact; for when our use of the bath became known to him he enjoined the practice upon all the family. It seemed to be something entirely new to the strangers who had joined us, and they talked much about it—but there was no indecorous washing, as has been rumoured. Mrs. Folger always had the assistance of her mother, or of a nurse who had been with us several years; and subsequently, after she left, of one or the other of the servants introduced into the family by Matthias—one of them was Mrs. Galloway, and the other the coloured woman, for a long time previous, and still a follower of him.

"Mrs. Folger always readily assisted any of the females in turn, when it was necessary. The bath-house was in the north wing of the building, where the nurse and children—and, when Mr. Folger was absent, Mrs. Folger—slept. Matthias was quick to observe and improve upon little circumstances. Soon after his visit commenced with us, the housekeeper in replenishing the pitcher in his room, carried up more water than the pitcher would hold, and poured the surplus in the wash-bowl. He observed it—said his spirit had directed it, which she had done well to obey; and from that time he made it a law that all must wash his or her hands the first thing in the morning. Many instances of this kind, where he borrowed ideas and examples from others,

could be named, and we would sometimes tell him so; but he would argue the subject quite ingeniously —showing that the action was by his spirit, and that we were indebted to him for the loan of it. Indeed, whatever was said or done in the community, that met his approval, was by the influence of his spirit, sent forth by him. He could, as he said, call his spirit out of any individual to give an account to him, from any part of the world, in a moment. This he called his omnipresence.

"The image of gold spoken of in Daniel, he said, represented this government, and that President Jackson and his government were the toes of this image—which were part iron and part clay—that this was the last of the republican governments. He foretold the disturbances and the result of the elections in 1834, and that this should be but a beginning of the coming down of the churches, or, as he termed them, of the synagogues of Satan. He advanced many strange ideas upon this subject, but enough, it is thought, has been said. He pronounced a wo upon those who should come in at the heels of General Jackson, of which the falling in of the bridge at the time of General Jackson's arrival at New-York was a type. He declared this government at an end—but of his, Matthias's, government there would be no end—for he was the Wonderful Counsellor, the Everlasting Prince, the Mighty God —and where should the government be but upon his shoulders.

"The more we were persecuted (as he called all interference), or spoken against, the clearer he made

it out that he answered to the character spoken of in Isaiah, who treadeth the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with him. His red sash and claret clothing were worn as emblematic of his being the character referred to in Isaiah. His green clothes signified that the Dove, or Holy Spirit, had found a resting-place, for he had seen the day when he, man, had not where to lay his head. He referred to a time just before he came to Singsing.

"He conferred upon Mr. Pierson, what he called the gift of the Holy Ghost in September, 1833.* He attributed the recovery of Mr. Pierson, from a dangerous attack of paralysis about that time to his extraordinary gift: but it may be attributed to the skill and faithful attention of Dr. P * * * * of New York, attended with God's blessing.

His white caps exhibited at the Police court in New York, and subsequently exhibited in William street to a great number, were made by his instructions, but upon no particular occasion. He called them pale Mitres. Two of them had twelve points, and one, twenty-four, with the names in his own writing, of the twelve Apostles, one in each point—

* There seems to be an error here in the date, or perhaps the ceremony was repeated. The following entry occurs in Mr. Pierson's diary:—

Monday, August 12th, 1833. Mr. Matthias came to see me in the afternoon. After considerable conversation, he laid his hands upon me, and breathing upon me, said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: thou art confirmed a son of God. In obedience thou art blessed:" and many things connected with this were said.—*Author.*

and the other twelve points, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. His three-cornered hat had upon it thirteen points of gold lace. He at first censured the maker very much, because it had *thirteen*, but after inquiry of the spirit, it was all right. It had a green fringe on the three upper edges, with a yellow edge, which was worn as an emblem of Him that sitteth upon the throne, having a rainbow round about his head. The silk linings of his coat and cloak were of various colours, representing Joseph's coat. His rod of iron was to rule the nations as spoken of in Revelation. His iron chain, key, and two-edged sword were also emblems of his character as spoken of in Revelation. His plumb-line, as the Lord with a plumb-line in his hand, as spoken of in Amos, vii. 7, 8.

"His carriage he called the chariot of Israel. It seldom went abroad except when he was in it. Occasionally he took with him different members of the family—sometimes his children, at others Mr. Pierson, or Mr. Folger, or Mrs. Folger and one of her children, *but in no one instance* did Mrs. Folger ride out with him unaccompanied by some third person.

"He regarded the marriages in the Gentile world as illegal, inasmuch as they were performed by ministers who confessed they were sinners even in their prayers to God, and sometimes calling themselves the chief of sinners, and yet saying in conclusion to the marriage ceremony, 'What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' He advanced many arguments to show the illegality and

the insufficiency of ministers, upon Bible principles, to perform so important and holy an ordinance. He said if he had endowed them with the Holy Ghost, and sent them to preach his Gospel, he would have given them power to forgive sins. By way of illustrating, he would inquire, 'What merchant that employs an agent to collect money, does not empower him to give a receipt in full.'

"Mr. and Mrs. Folger first received the doctrines of Matthias upon the subject of marriage through Mr. Pierson, nearly a year before Matthias came to Singsing. As has been stated before, Mr. Pierson was our teacher; we were aware that his views differed essentially from those advanced by most Christians, yet we had known him long, and had confidence in his piety and his experience. He said much respecting our marriage, and upon his (Mr. Pierson's) urgency, we were married by him, Dec. 31, 1832. The following is a copy of the note made of it at the time:—

"'Mount Pleasant, Dec. 31, 1832.

"'The marriage of Benjamin H. Folger to Ann Disbrow, in Gospel order—Present, Elijah Pierson.

"'*B. H. F.* Ann, I take you to be my lawful wife, and I promise to cherish and protect you. I pray God that this renewal of my pledge may be acceptable in his sight, and that I may be kept in it.

"'*Ann.* Benjamin, I take you to be my lawful husband, and promise to reverence, obey, and love you.

"'*Mr. Pierson.* In obedience you are blessed. And following on to know the Lord, ye shall know him and become the sons and daughters of the living God.

"'*Note.*—We were married in what is called the Christian order in May, 1823.—*B. H. F.*'

"Some time after Matthias came to our house, about eight months subsequent to the above named occurrence, we told him of the circumstance, and expressed our anxiety to be legally married, if we had not been. He replied that it was well we had been thus re-married, as he had declared about the time we were married by Mr. Pierson, that all the marriages in the world were illegal, and should be destroyed. He then married us himself, much in the same way that Mr. Pierson had done.

"The impression abroad that marriages were rejected by us is an error. It was regarded as a most sacred ordinance. Matthias's objection was to the want of the proper order in the present regulations of the Gentile world. God, he said, had nothing to do with the marriage of the wicked, or, to use his words, with the marriage of devils. Nor was it acceptable in the sight of God for an unholy person—a devil—to marry people. Another objection was, —which he instanced as a proof of error in the matter,—that matches were made without there being, seemingly, on the part of parents and guardians any regard paid to the question whether the parties were suited for, or at all calculated to make each other happy, and that the consequence was, that marriages

were generally productive of unhappiness, and to most of the female parties, it was a state of wretchedness. The true plan, according to his idea, and the one practised by the children of God, was for the parent to choose for them in early life, to educate them with this understanding, and at a proper age to unite them.

"He knew all things, as he said. He had known our course in life—of Mrs. Folger's having held prayer meetings, with other females, from house to house, and declared that they had prayed Samuel out of his grave the second time, who had appeared before him in Albany.

"We did not worship him (Matthias) precisely as many suppose. For a time after he came to us, we continued our regular family worship in the usual manner. He joined in it so far as to shut his eyes when others were in prayer, but would never kneel with others. After a while, he objected to others kneeling, or practising closet prayer,—that God had made man upright and did not require him to kneel—nor was the spirit pleased with a person's going into a dark corner of the house to thank God in secret. God loved light and hated darkness. That the true method was to thank the spirit of God in the person who bestowed a blessing, for we might be sure the devil would bestow no blessing on us. We did not cease to pray, but our prayers were mostly ejaculatory. We always addressed God by the various names furnished by the Scriptures, such as the Great Jehovah—the God of Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob—the Almighty God—Spirit of Truth—King of kings and Lord of Lords.

"He knew our sincerity and purpose of heart to serve God, and that we had occasionally many doubts, and he laboured earnestly at such seasons until he had removed them. We have no doubt that God has seen our afflictions and witnessed our sorrows. Our confidence has been truly in God. He has delivered us from these errors, and, we trust, will yet deliver us from all their consequences.

"He had the command of the house as our head, or teacher, and 'Father,' and spent much time in teaching Mr. Pierson and Mr. Folger how to rule their households when we should become separate families, which must soon take place, to give him an opportunity of teaching others; for there were many to whom he had preached, nearly ready to come into the kingdom.

"Mrs. Folger was called 'Mother' by nearly all the family. Matthias directed this for the reasons that she conducted the affairs of the house—provided clothing—washed and combed the children, and made them every way comfortable, which was a hard task, for there were fifteen persons in the family, and there were only three females, including Mrs. Folger. But the evil was, that he always took the meal time to preach, and generally preached so long that it was very difficult to find sufficient time to get through the duties. He often detained the breakfast-table until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning—say three to four hours; he would spend several hours at the dinner-table; and the supper

(as the third meal was always called) table until eight, nine, ten, or eleven o'clock at night. The house was required to be kept in complete order, and the meals ready at stated hours. Sometimes, when the detention had been great by his preaching, he would undertake to impart a double portion of the necessary spirit for the occasion, which those who performed the duties fancied they had, for they often accomplished more in a given time than they supposed it possible to do under other circumstances. The boys very often rendered assistance, as they knew there would be loud censure if all things were not in readiness in season. The employment of the boys, including three of his own, pleased him, as it fitted them, according to his views, for the office of Levites. We were bound to love each other as we loved ourselves, and always to warn a brother or sister of danger when any of them were seen to break any of the rules of the house. He whipped his own children severely, several times, with a cow-hide whip, until some one would stand responsible for them. Mrs. Folger, in the absence of Mr. Folger and Mr. Pierson, became responsible the first time for the two youngest, but he gave notice that he would not accept a female mediator after that time.

"He was anxious to have his family with us for some time before they finally came. Mr. Folger was unwilling to go for them, and suggested that Mr. Matthias himself should go, with the carriage and horses, but he declined for reasons known only to himself. At length Mr. Matthias's and Mr. Pier-

son's continued urgency prevailed, and Mr. Folger took his son with him and went to Albany, with the carriage, for his wife and children. He found them in reduced circumstances, and barely able to obtain a support. He gave Mrs. Matthews whatever means she asked for, to clothe the children with warm clothing entirely—bought several articles and presented them, and gave her money for her own purposes. Mr. Folger was instructed by Matthias before he left home, as he understood him, in case any thing should prevent any of the family from coming before the spring, to have them comfortably provided for there until that time; and in conformity with this direction, Mr. Folger promised to remit Mrs. Matthews thirty dollars on the first of each month, for the support of herself and youngest child, about five years old—as she determined not to go herself, or send the youngest child, until spring; but on reporting the promise to Matthias, he said he had been misunderstood, and totally forbade any money being sent her—that she was a wicked, lying devil, unworthy of any favour. Mrs. Matthews gave into Mr. F.'s charge four of the children—a daughter and three sons. The daughter had been married about a month previous, to a young man by the name of Laisdell; but for some reason, never explained, this was concealed from Mr. Folger by the mother and the husband, or he would have felt it his duty to have had the husband accompany the children, or to decline taking the daughter. Mrs. Laisdell mentioned her marriage in the course of conversation on the journey. The boys were somewhat

ungovernable, and having been rather exposed at Albany, their manners were not as good as could have been desired, so that with four boys (including his own son) and Mrs. Laisdell, he found it quite a burdensome expedition, and excited much remark on the road, which was truly unpleasant.

"Soon after the arrival at Zion Hill—as the residence at Mount Pleasant was called—Mr. Matthias sent Mr. Pierson to bring his daughter to him. The father and daughter were left in a room together. We heard him whip her, and her cries, and we suppose he whipped her with a cowhide, although we did not know that he had one—it sounded as though he struck her three times. He then sent for Mrs. Folger—told her to furnish Mrs. Laisdell with a dress, as she then had on a habit sent to Albany for her by Mrs. Folger. Matthias likewise directed another suit of clothes to be prepared for each of his boys. Mrs. Folger then took Mrs. Laisdell to a room, assisted in dressing her, and washed and dressed the children. The family then dined, and the afternoon and evening were spent in listening to Matthias's conversation or teaching. Mrs. Laisdell appeared cheerful, and answered all her father's questions respectfully. The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Matthias called for Mrs. Folger to come to the parlour, where he was conversing with Mr. Pierson, and told her to go to Mrs. Laisdell and ask her how she felt towards her father, and to let him know—she went accordingly, and found Mrs. Laisdell in her room sitting by a window. Mrs. Folger took a seat beside her, made some observations upon the

scenery in view, and then asked her if she felt happy and contented? Mrs. Laisdell replied that the place was a pleasant one, and there was every thing there calculated to make her happy; but the idea of living with, or being under the control of her father, who was a tyrant, would imbitter all her days. Mrs. Folger asked her if it was not possible she was mistaken—that she thought him a very holy, enlightened, but persecuted man. Mrs. Laisdell replied that she knew him better than we did, and, for her part, she had rather die than live with him. Mrs. Folger told her she should be careful how she rejected the instruction her father was, as she thought, capable of giving. Mrs. Laisdell then asked if she could write to Albany? Mrs. Folger replied, that she did not know, that she could ask her father, who could furnish her with pen and paper, as he had the key of the desk. She requested Mrs. Folger to ask for the articles, and she went to do so. He was still sitting in the parlour with Mr. Pierson. She asked him if Mrs. Laisdell could have writing materials to write to her mother. He made no reply to this, but asked what her feelings were towards him. Mrs. Folger replied that Mrs. Laisdell wished to return to her mother, as she had promised to; but he exacted of Mrs. Folger *all* she had said, which she repeated—not anticipating any farther correction, as she was not accustomed to such scenes. Mrs. Folger then left them to attend to the duties of the house, and in a few minutes he brought his daughter into the room which she was putting in order. It would seem that she had de-

nied to him what she had said to Mrs. Folger; for he inquired, on entering the room, 'did she not say she had rather die than live with me?'—to which Mrs. Folger replied, 'Yes, sir.' He then took a cowhide-whip, which must have been concealed about his person, and said, 'take death with every stroke.' Mrs. Folger stood in alarm, not knowing what to do, but to stand still. She knew, too, that Mr. Pierson was in the next room, but he did not interfere. But Mrs. Laisdell appeared to know her father, and know what to do, for she first held up one hand above her head, and then both, upon which he immediately ceased whipping her. Mrs. Folger felt much sympathy for her, but dared not to express it—she put her arms round her neck and kissed her—washed her wounded shoulders and put sweet oil on them. Mr. Matthias appeared very kind to her always after this; but he observed to Mr. Pierson at the time, and to the family afterward, that her mother's spirit was in her, but he had cast it out, which seemed to be a confirmation of our then belief, for she manifested from that time, as long as she was with us, a pleasant spirit. Mrs. Matthews was represented by her husband as a very wicked woman. Sometimes we would remember Mrs. Laisdell's words respecting her father, which, taken in connection with Mrs. Matthews's statement to Mr. Folger, while he was at Albany, in which she mentioned some extremely brutal treatment, would excite doubts. But this was repeated to Matthias, and he denied it entirely, and pronounced her one of the greatest of liars, whose

word could not be taken for any thing. Mr. Pierson would say, when the subject was mentioned to him, that 'Joshua, the high-priest, must be found with Satan at his right hand to resist him, as declared in the third chapter of Zechariah.' Mrs. Folger has seen Mrs. Matthews since our separation from Matthias, and she appeared to be an agreeable woman. Her accounts to Mrs. Folger of her sufferings with Mr. Matthias, awakened her sympathies for her, and she expressed her regret to Mrs. Matthews that she had not come to Zion Hill when sent for.

"Matthias once whipped the coloured woman (Isabella) under the following circumstances. She was quite unwell, which Mrs. Folger observed, and asked Matthias, who came into the kitchen, if she might lie down, a request that was granted. She, however, did not avail herself of the permission, but sat down by the kitchen fire. Matthias again visited the kitchen within an hour or two—found one of his sons in some mischief, which he corrected him for, and the coloured woman undertook to intercede, which was offensive to Matthias, as it was a female intercessor, possessed of a sick devil withal—upon which he quickly lashed her with his cowhide, saying, 'Shall a sick devil undertake to dictate to me?' She then denied that she was sick, and was called up stairs to testify that the sick devil had departed, and appeared well from that time. We presume we should all have submitted to stripes in time, for he taught us that if we deserved them it would be a lighter punishment than the spirit would

inflict commissioned by him, and, indeed, we would rather have taken stripes sometimes, than hear his long vollies of threats, and curses, and his swearing by himself, for there was none greater, that they should all come to pass at his word.

"For the most trifling offence of one of the children the whole family must needs be summoned, and each one testify if all had been done to prevent the evil, and to offer an opportunity for some one to intercede for the transgressor who was exposed to his wrath. Sometimes he would in these cases implicate two or three, and at others, the whole family. He managed these cases very ingeniously: he would discern and trace the spirit from one to another until he could fix it in the one that was strongest in the faith and could best bear reproof, upon whom he would vent himself. He could save all, however deeply implicated, when asked for salvation. Sometimes he was obliged to be responsible for his own sons, for we were at times wearied of him, his doctrines, and his family, for his boys took advantage of his mode of government, and none were willing to become responsible for them. But this he would get along with: he would go into a state of extreme suffering,—apparently, his nerves would become contracted,—he would appear to weep,—and then his darling attribute, justice, would be satisfied. When he became tired of this, as we now suppose he did, and the same difficulties occurred with his sons, he adopted another plan;—he would hand his two-edged sword to the injured party, to cut off his (Matthias's) hand, or arm, or to wound him, as much

again placed upon his couch, she informed Mr. Matthias of the fact. He was conversing with Mrs. Dratch upon the piazza, made no reply, but continued his conversation, and Mrs. D. continued to listen. In the evening they sat in conversation in the parlour. Mrs. D. retired about nine o'clock, previously offering to sit up with Mr. Pierson if it was necessary; but Matthias said it was not, that he did not allow it. Mrs. Folger then called up the coloured woman, saying also to Mr. Matthias that she felt very uneasy about Mr. Pierson, especially as no drink was given him. Matthias then directed the coloured woman to bring some water, which direction she obeyed. He asked for a pint pitcher, directed the coloured woman to hold the cloth by the sides of Mr. Pierson's mouth, to catch the water as it escaped from it, and Matthias then poured the water from the pitcher, some four or five feet above him. This operation caused a shocking noise or gurgling in the throat, which Mrs. Folger could not remain to hear, and hastened from the sound. When she returned, this noise had ceased, and Matthias had ceased to give him drink. Mr. Pierson had fits now in rapid succession, and the peculiar noise he made could be heard in every part of the house. The coloured woman inquired if she should remain with Mr. Pierson, but Matthias said, no, and directed her to go to bed, and retired himself. Mrs. Folger and the coloured woman sat up with him, however, until 12 o'clock, when Mrs. Folger laid herself down, only to rest, feeling that her health required it; but she did not

sleep—constantly hearing Mr. Pierson until after one o'clock. Not long after the peculiar noise from Mr. Pierson ceased, she heard Matthias go to his room. Following thither herself, she met him coming from it. The moment Matthias saw Mrs. Folger, he said Mr. Pierson was dead. Mrs. Folger was struck with surprise, and asked him how he felt, or what he thought—she does not know which;—he replied, don't ask me now, and retired to his room. Mrs. Folger slept in the room with Mr. Pierson's daughter and her own children. She told his daughter early in the morning that her father was dead. The event was unexpected to her, as it had been to Mrs. Folger, since we were all led to believe, as we had been taught, that death would not be allowed to make a prey of one of us, but that the Holy Ghost, which was given us, would enable us to conquer the last enemy. When Mrs. Folger arose in the morning, Wednesday, 6th August, she found Mrs. Dratch in the parlour with Matthias, who was explaining to her why Mr. Pierson must die, or go down as John the Baptist, and that Mr. Pierson had committed some sin unto death, which would not suffer that body to enter the kingdom of heaven, but much of his spirit was valuable, which was all then with him, Matthias, who would give him another body. Mrs. Dratch returned to New York that afternoon. Just previous to her departure, Mr. Matthias gave her money; from which circumstance it is inferred that she informed Matthias as to the object of her visit to Mount Pleasant and to Mr. Pierson. It should be

mentioned here that Mrs. Dratch is a widow lady, who has a very aged mother dependent upon her efforts with those of her sister, with the needle, for support,—that they have, at times, found it exceedingly difficult to get along, and have been assisted by Mr. Pierson and Mr. Folger.

"At Mrs. Folger's request, upon Mrs. Dratch's arrival in New-York, she immediately called at Mr. Folger's office, who was expected to return to New-York on that day from a journey to the north, upon which he had been absent some nine or ten days—met him there, and communicated the news of Mr. Pierson's death. Mr. Folger was as much surprised at the event as had been the other members of the family. He immediately waited upon such of the relatives of Mr. Pierson as he could recollect, and at their request, made arrangements for the removal of the body to New-Jersey. He had a sealed coffin prepared—the weather being very warm—engaged a hearse, and with a coach, accompanied by two female relatives of Mr. Pierson, went to Mount Pleasant early the next day. He likewise addressed a letter to Mr. Mahlon Pierson, near Bottle Hill, N. J., acquainting him with the death of his brother, and all the particulars then within his knowledge (not having been at Mount Pleasant at any time during his sickness), and despatched a messenger with the communication to the residence of Mr. Pierson.

"On the day of Mr. Pierson's death, Mrs. Dratch, on her way to the steamboat, promulgated the report in the village of Singsing that Mr. Pierson

had been found dead in his bed. A coroner's inquest was held on the body that afternoon: Mrs. Folger was the fifth person examined. She informed them that her husband was absent, and, as she was ignorant of legal matters, wished to know if they had a right to proceed as they were doing;—they replied that their proceedings were all legal. She then detailed to them all the particulars of Mr. Pierson's sickness and death; she said she did not consider this event as they did, a visitation of Providence, but that the devil, death, had robbed us of the *body* of Mr. Pierson, while his *spirit* was as much with us as ever. They asked if Mr. Pierson had had medicine given him;—she replied no,—that they considered medicine an evil,—that Mr. Pierson would not have taken any while he had his senses, and violence had not been done to his often expressed sentiments on this point, after he had lost his senses. They inquired if Mrs. Folger would not employ a physician if she was herself sick;—she said no,—that she had already passed through the hands of so many that she feared her body might yet be rejected from entering the kingdom of Heaven. They asked several questions relative to Mr. Pierson's property and business with Mr. Folger;—she replied that she knew no particulars respecting it,—referred them to her husband, whom she believed to be a correct business man, and that they might rest assured he would render a true and accurate statement of all his transactions with Mr. Pierson,—that she knew from their conversations that they had confidence in each other, and were partners in some

kind of business; and, in conclusion, said if they had any more inquiries to make she would like to hear them. She then mentioned that there were some marks on the skin of Mr. Pierson, which were occasioned by his knocking his feet together while in the fits, but if they found any marks of violence on his body, or were not satisfied, they would oblige her by letting her know it. Mrs. Folger then left the room, and supposed they examined the body. Matthias was very quiet during this time: he had sent for one of the neighbours, Mr. Bishop—the only man he respected in the neighbourhood, except Judge Keymes—and requested him to make arrangements for the burial. Mr. Bishop purchased a coffin and had a grave dug in the burying-ground in the neighbourhood. The body was to have been buried there on the next day (Thursday) at noon; but the arrival of Mr. Folger from New-York, with the two female relatives of Mr. Pierson, and preparations for the removal of the body to New-Jersey, changed the arrangement. Mr. Folger accompanied the corpse to New-York, and, as circumstances prevented his visiting the state of New-Jersey, he wrote a line to Mr. Mahlon Pierson, stating those circumstances, and engaged an acquaintance to go in charge of the hearse and carriage, accompanied by the two females before mentioned. They proceeded that night, and in the course of it, reached Mr. Mahlon Pierson's residence.

"Matthias wished to leave Mount Pleasant and go to New-York in his carriage on the same afternoon, an hour or two after Mr. Folger had left with

the corpse, but did not leave until the next morning, when he took his departure with Lewis the coachman. He wished Mrs. Folger to ride down in the carriage with him, but she replied that her health would not allow her to incur the fatigue, and, moreover, that she wished to remain with her children. Being reminded, however, that Mr. Folger had said, just as he left, that he should expect her down the next day, she made arrangements for departure, and went down in the steamboat that afternoon, accompanied by the coloured woman.

"Mr. Folger expressed his great surprise at the death of Mr. Pierson to Matthias, who said to him in reply, that he should serve all his enemies in like manner,—that as soon as he found that his (Matthias's) spirit had rejected the body of Mr. Pierson, he had gone into his own room and made a sign as simple as to turn the spoke of a chair—this is the precise expression of Matthias—which never failed, and referred to Ezekiel's signs for the certainty of it. He informed Mr. and Mrs. Folger that they should be dealt with in like manner if they opposed him, or proved treacherous to him, declaring again that he possessed the power to do it, and they still feared that he did.

"Matthias now continually advanced new ideas, preaching whenever opportunity offered,—but in the absence of Mr. Pierson, who was, so to speak (and was so called), the second witness for truth, it was more difficult for him to convince Mr. and Mrs. Folger of his new doctrines, the more especially as it appeared about this time that he could not over-

come the legal proceedings instituted by the attorneys of the estate of Mr. Pierson. In a conversation with Matthias in the same month of Mr. Pierson's death, Mr. Folger told him what the laws were, and suggested his surrendering the title to any property he possessed of Mr. Pierson's. He at first rejected it, but afterward said he would not contend with them under such circumstances: that of course he could not have justice in a gentile court. Upon this, supposing all would be done, Mr. Folger invited Mr. B.—— and Mr. C——, two relatives of Mr. Pierson, to arrived to Third-street and have an interview with Matthias. When they came, he seated himself in a large rocking-chair in the middle of the floor, and instead of entering upon the business upon which they came, he immediately commenced preaching to them, censuring the Christian religion, and going on in his usual manner, engrossing almost exclusively the conversation; but occasionally those gentlemen would interpose a few words of reply, and both discovered a knowledge and an ability to defend the doctrines of Christianity. The patience of the former held out the longest, but at length his was exhausted. When at last they asked him the surrender of the property in question, to the surprise of Mr. Folger, he declined, and said he would test the strength of the gentile laws. Mr. Folger was quiet until they had gone, when he expressed his surprise that he had not done as Mr. Folger had understood him he would. He replied that the spirit had told him that he must not, at all hazards, surrender to the devil the property of God.

"Mr. Folger had frequently before this told him of the increasing difficulties of his business; he now informed him that he should be obliged to remove his family into more limited quarters, and reduce his expenses. As Mr. and Mrs. Folger, however, still believed him to be a good man, the former told him of his having in his possession the sum of about eight hundred dollars, received from the estate of his wife, which he regarded as distinctly his own, and that if he required it, he would give him a part of it. Mrs. Folger was present at this conversation, closely observed his countenance, and for the first time discovered alarm depicted on it, which she immediately spoke of, but he denied that it was so. He spent much time in arguing and in trying to dissuade Mr. Folger from his purpose, who was, he said, in a lost condition. In this unsettled situation we remained some time. Mr. Folger was constantly urging Matthias to leave, and he refusing to go, saying he would not until all his arguments had failed, and he was forced to quit. He told his children they were at liberty to do as they pleased, of which permission they readily took advantage and acted accordingly—venting upon Mrs. Folger, her children, and the rest of the family their rage, during the day, in the absence of Mr. Folger upon his business. She bore it in silence, however, not yet knowing but that he was all that he represented himself to be; for their belief in him had been sincere, and was strongly established. The rest of the family, exclusive of Mr. and Mrs. Folger and their children, manifested stronger faith in him than ever.

At length, while Mr. Folger was abroad, he began to charge Mrs. Folger as being responsible for breaking up "the kingdom." She would then tell the family, in his presence, what the circumstances were, but to little or no purpose, for as soon as her back was turned, he would say so much to the contrary, as to recall them to believe in his statements; and they no doubt were aware that it might be some time before they would be able to find another so independent and well-provided a home.

"Mr. Folger at this time was much occupied and tried in his mind with business perplexities, and finding him still decided in his determination to separate, Mrs. Folger forbore to mention to him her trials in his absence from the house, being sustained by the hope of a speedy deliverance from them. But Matthias at last ascertaining that Mr. Folger was not to be wrought upon farther by him, attempted to terrify Mrs. Folger into a farther belief of his doctrines. She, however, told him that she had not faith, and therefore could not exercise it. He asked, if it was then her determination to pursue the course her husband had proposed; if it was, he added, he had made the same sign for her he had made for Mr. Pierson, which would not fail. She said, firmly, it was. He then said, at the height of his voice, which was, on the whole, almost deafening, stamping at the same time violently with his feet, she should be D-A-M-N-E-D! Mrs. Folger was much alarmed, and feared that the earth would open and swallow her up, or something worse. She was then quite unwell and wearied, and did not feel sure,

for a time, but that some of his curses had taken effect. But finding that she outlived one curse, she felt encouraged to urge her husband, when he came home in the evening, to be more prompt in effecting the dismissal of Matthias ; and on the following morning she proposed that he should leave her up-stairs, and say to Matthias distinctly that he should have no more opportunity of preaching to her, and insist upon his leaving that day. This was done, and he promised to go, but requested that the family might dine together once more. Mr. Folger took Mrs. Folger's breakfast up to her room, and she drank freely of the coffee. She then asked to have her little daughter, about six years old, sent up to her. When the child came up-stairs, she said, "Mother, Mr. Matthias said that was not the Lord's table they ate at this morning, but the devil's," and that Mr. Matthias did not eat any breakfast. The child likewise said that the coffee was not good, and that she could not drink it.

"Mr. Folger, being much occupied that morning in delivering the articles of furniture belonging to the estate of Mr. Pierson, which was to be sold at auction, sent for Mrs. Folger, as he needed her assistance. Meeting her little son, about ten years of age, as she descended the stairs, he said to her, "Mother, the coffee was so bad this morning I could hardly drink it." She merely replied to him, being busy, "Why did you drink it then?" and the circumstance escaped her mind, as did the other complaint from the little girl.

"Matthias seized an opportunity, while Mr. Fol-

ger was in another part of the house delivering furniture, to renew his threats upon Mrs. Folger. He was then seated in the kitchen, preaching to Catharine and the coloured woman. Mrs. Folger was engaged down-stairs, and continued to be until dinner was ready. Matthias did not eat any dinner, but wept while the rest were eating—intending perhaps to try the force of tears, for he did shed real tears. Mrs. Folger did not observe the coloured woman at that time, but has at other times, that she did not eat when Matthias abstained. Mrs. Folger retired to her room after dinner, with her children. It rained that afternoon, and Matthias pleaded that circumstance as an excuse to Mr. Folger that he did not depart. At supper-time Matthias seated himself at the table, but did not partake. He remarked that he began to realize his situation, and commenced pronouncing woes upon those who had caused it. Mr. Folger forbade his preaching any more to his family, and he was silenced for the time.

"Mr. Folger asked him if he should send his sons to their mother in Albany; Matthias replied he would as soon send them to hell,—but in the same breath said he wished he would. On a second reflection, however, it seemed to be his design to keep house somewhere in New-York. He packed up their clothes with his, and said he should take them with him. Mr. Folger soon after this recollected that he had promised their mother, that if they were to leave his family, he would send them to her. He accordingly told Matthias of it and that it *must* be done; and within three days, after having things

properly prepared, Mr. Folger committed them to the care of the captain of a steamboat, paid their expenses to Albany, and sent them home.

"Immediately after supper, on the last night Matthias was in the house, he went to bed. Mr. Folger had an errand out on business, and went to attend to it. Mrs. Folger, with Catharine, retired to her room, but having occasion to go to the kitchen after a while, Matthias was found there with the coloured woman. Catharine accompanied Mrs. Folger to the kitchen, whereupon Matthias and the coloured woman began to persuade her to join them in keeping house,—and they no doubt would have induced Catharine to go with them, but for the advice of Mr. and Mrs. Folger.

"During that night, Mrs. Folger was quite unwell and did not sleep. She observed that Mr. Folger was very restless and groaned in his sleep. The children, who were in the next room with Catharine, were restless and wakeful, and rather wild and light-headed. Catharine was also restless and groaned in her sleep. Mrs. Folger then remembered the children's complaint about the coffee, and Matthias not eating when they did. In consequence of this, she told Catharine in the morning to get breakfast separately for us,—to be sure she washed every thing to be used, and not to use any of the provisions then in the house. Catharine then mentioned to Mrs. Folger that she had observed the coffee was bad the morning before, had a strange taste, and had something white in it;—that she had asked the coloured woman the cause of it, who had replied

accompany him, whenever he was out about the premises, to report to Matthias if he was attacked. The attacks were generally slight, and he would be walking about in from half an hour to an hour afterward. Mr. Pierson expressed himself satisfied that he should overcome them,—he regarded them as the last struggle of the devil with him, and he was satisfied he should master him. Matthias would often make him arise and walk before the fit was broken, which Mr. Pierson would be pleased to hear when he came out of the fit. He was not generally aware of an approaching attack by any unpleasant sensation, but sometimes he would say that he felt as though he should have a fit, upon which Matthias would tell him to resist it, and as he generally escaped on those occasions, it induced the belief that he had effectually resisted.

"Mr. Pierson's sickness, which terminated in his death, commenced on the afternoon of Tuesday, July 29, 1834. The evening—say twenty-four hours—before, he ate freely of some blackberries, picked by Matthias and his youngest son, and prepared with sugar for the table, as is supposed, by the coloured woman. The persons at the table at the time were Mr. Pierson, Mrs. Folger, Catharine, and Matthias. The latter served out the blackberries at that time, as he invariably did every description of food at the meals. He helped Mr. Pierson, Mrs. Folger, and Catharine to the berries, but none to himself. Mr. Pierson ate two ordinary sized dessert plates full: Catharine one: Mrs. Folger tasted of them; remarked that they were not

perfectly ripe and sweet; and, owing to the state of her health, which had been feeble for many years, declined them, lest they should disagree with her. Her appetite, from her long suffering, had become completely disciplined, and notwithstanding Matthias's frequent urging and commanding her to eat certain descriptions of food, she had not faith to do it. This was a point that Matthias endeavoured to overcome, but never succeeded. He took no notice of the remark of Mrs. Folger that the blackberries were not ripe and sweet, making his own meal of dry toast and coffee. He preached during the meal, as was his usual practice. Near the close of the meal, Mrs. Folger observed that Matthias had eaten no berries, and as soon as a sufficient pause in his speaking permitted, mentioned the circumstance, and inquired if he thought he had no plate, as his plate was a short distance from him. He immediately drew back from the table in anger, saying the sons were honoured and the daughters blessed themselves in the Father's house, but the Father did not receive the honour that was his due. He then continued preaching with severity,—more particularly to Mr. Pierson,—until a late hour of the night. This was Monday;—the next day, Tuesday, Mr. Pierson went into the field to assist in making hay,—picking and eating blackberries. In the afternoon, at about four o'clock, while engaged in salting the hay, he was taken with one of his fits, in the barn. Anthony, a German labourer, was with him at the time, and Mr. Folger's little son, ten years of age. According to Matthias's instruc-

tions, no one was allowed to touch him in such cases until he himself should come. Being soon called by the little boy, he made Mr. Pierson walk to the house, although he had not as yet revived, —they entered the house by way of the kitchen stairs, and Mr. Pierson was overtaken by another fit before he could be taken up the stairs, and from which he did not, as usual, recover his senses. While Mrs. Folger was engaged washing his head with cold water, he had another very hard fit, and after this he began to vomit and have free evacuations from his bowels, which continued all night. Several severe fits followed successively during the night. Mrs. Folger and Mr. Pierson's daughter were with him until a late hour, and the coloured woman continued with him all night. Mrs. Folger visited the room frequently during the night to see that he was properly attended to.

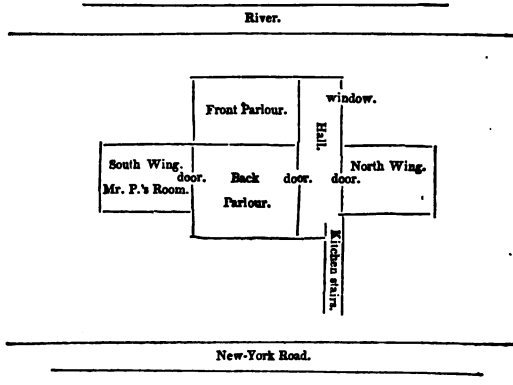
"Matthias expressed displeasure that Mr. Pierson encouraged the sick spirit, and when Mr. Pierson began to vomit, he said he did not know but that he should vomit himself if he staid there a minute. He then retired to his room, and did not see Mr. Pierson until after breakfast the next morning.

"On the same evening, but some hours afterward, Catharine (who had also partaken of the blackberries the day before) was also taken ill. She had severe pain in the bowels, and nausea at the stomach, and was in all respects affected in like manner with Mr. Pierson, excepting the absence of fits, and the retention of her senses. She, too, was attended by Mrs. Folger and the coloured woman. Matthias, upon being made acquainted with both

cases, on the next (Wednesday) morning, was very angry, and accused those who nursed and attended them of being accessary to bringing in and harbouring the sick devil in the house of God, and denounced many curses upon such, so that they feared they should incur the curses every time they offered any service to Mr. Pierson. When Mrs. Folger first visited Mr. Pierson, on Wednesday morning, she asked him how he felt, and if he was aware of the critical and trying night he had passed through. He was sensible, said he was aware of having had several fits, and knew what had been done for him. Mrs. Folger then asked him if he would have some toast-water? he replied, *no*, but some coffee, with a look that conveyed to Mrs. Folger the idea that he did not wish any thing like medicine, or the nursing of sickness. On this point—that sickness was a devil and could be resisted and cast out—Mr. Pierson was, as he had been for a long time, very decided, and those who knew his peculiar disposition, well know that it was of no use to contend with him. Mrs. Folger took him some coffee, which he drank, but threw up immediately, as he did every thing he received into his stomach that day. Mrs. Folger placed a pitcher of toast-water in his room, notwithstanding his forbidding look, just mentioned, that he might take it if he thought proper, or that Matthias might give it to him if he saw fit to do so; but it remained untouched. Catharine took nothing but toast-water that day—rested and dieted for several days, unobserved by Matthias, and recovered. On Thursday Mr. Pierson was up, walked out, and

partook of the meals at the table, prepared for the family—as he did likewise on Friday and Saturday, but he would occasionally have slight paralytic attacks; sometimes at the table, when Matthias would lead him to his room and close the door. Mr. Pierson seemed to think this all right. He did not appear to lose his senses. If he was spoken to during these three days, his attempts to speak in reply would produce a slight convulsive attack—whereupon Matthias would harshly censure the person speaking, for bringing the evil spirit upon him. The consequence was, that all feared to speak or offer service. As Mr. Pierson was stronger in the faith, and deeper initiated into the mysteries of the kingdom than others, he required as strict obedience to the doctrines as Matthias did, and it was understood as his wish that directions for any thing must come from Matthias only. On Saturday evening, Mrs. Folger was in the kitchen, engaged in washing the children. The coloured woman was likewise there, engaged in baking. Elizabeth, Mr. Pierson's daughter, came there with a request to the coloured woman to go up and wash her father's feet; the coloured woman remarked that she was busy and could not leave. Mrs. Folger asked Elizabeth if she could not wash her father's feet if Isabella (the coloured woman) took up the water? she replied, yes, but that her father wished to speak to Isabella; the latter then said, she supposed she must go, but that her work required her attention. Mrs. Folger inquired of Elizabeth if Mr. Matthias was with her father, and learned from her that he was. Mrs.

Folger then directed the coloured woman to take up the water, and ask Mr. Matthias and Mr. Pierson if she could be excused, but she did not return. When Mrs. Folger had finished her duties in the kitchen, which had detained her some time after the children had retired, she came up and seated herself at a window in the hall.



As she passed the parlour door, immediately opposite the door of the south wing, which Mr. Pierson occupied, she observed Mr. Pierson, Mr. Matthias, and the coloured woman in conversation. Mr. Matthias soon afterward came into the hall, and continued pacing it until the coloured woman came out, and, when half-way between the parlour door and kitchen stairway, Mr. Matthias and the coloured woman stopped and conversed in a low whisper for

about half-an-hour. Matthias then pointed to Mrs. Folger and motioned to her—she did not know what he meant, but concluded they wished her to go away, and she went into the north wing; but as she was not sure this was the case, and not suspecting any cause for it, she returned and resumed her seat in the hall—they then separated a few steps, but he quickly stepped to the kitchen stairway and resumed his conversation with the coloured woman, in the same low whisper, and continued it for some ten or fifteen minutes, when they separated, and the coloured woman went to the kitchen, and Mr. Matthias to Mr. Pierson's room. Mrs. Folger asked him, as he passed her, for what he had motioned to her with his hand; he replied, to take away the candle. Mrs. Folger then went to the kitchen to assist the coloured woman with her work. She asked the latter what Mr. Pierson wished to see her about, and she replied, that he wanted to ask her to forgive him. It seems that Mr. Pierson and Isabella had had some dispute, and had incurred each other's displeasure, previous to this, while Mrs. Folger was at New-York. Mrs. Folger said to her, '*You forgive him!* what has he ever done to you to have occasion to ask forgiveness?' She replied, 'Enough,' but was not disposed to say any more. Mrs. Folger then asked her if that was what she and Mr. Matthias were conversing about so privately, to which she replied, 'Yes!' No more was thought of this circumstance until after the arrest of Matthias.

"On Sunday Mr. Pierson kept his bed. His

fits increased in number and violence. Matthias preached in the parlour, opposite Mr. Pierson's room, to all the family for several hours—the door of Mr. Pierson's room was open until he had a fit, when the coloured woman, who sat near the door, was directed by Matthias to shut it until the fit passed off, which she knew by the singular noise he made, and when it did she would open it again, and keep it open until the occurrence of another fit. In the latter part of this day, Sunday, Mrs. Folger ventured to ask Mr. Pierson to show her his tongue, which he did. She said to him that it was thickly coated, and that he needed, as she thought, evacuations from his bowels,—asking him if he did not think so himself. He made no reply, as was usual with him, if he felt himself dictated to by a person not having authority. Matthias was not present, but Mrs. Folger is not certain whether Mr. Pierson's daughter was or not. She was permitted to be with her father as much as she pleased, without blame; but all others were exposed to censure for visiting him. Much of this censure fell upon Mrs. Folger (who had suffered greatly from ill health herself), as she would visit his room to wash his hands and face with cold water, and would often call the coloured woman to change his position, as she was a strong and able person, and was always willing to do it.

"Matthias and the coloured woman spent this evening in conversation respecting his eldest son, who had clandestinely left Singsing while his father was at New-York. Mr. Pierson had previously

told Mr. Matthias the particulars of his going, in which matter the coloured woman was shown to have been in fault; but the latter now made *her* statement. It appeared that Isabella had stewed some cherries, which the boy had stolen and eaten. She acquainted Mr. Pierson with the circumstance, who scolded the boy, and threatened to inform his father—whereupon the lad ran away. Matthias expressed much displeasure towards Mr. Pierson for an accusation of theft against his son, in his father's house—asserting that it was out of the question for a son to steal any thing belonging to his father. This conversation was so loud that Mr. Pierson could have heard it; but Mrs. Folger heard no more of the subject.

The next morning, Monday, Mrs. Folger visited Mr. Pierson's room, and found him still worse. She requested his daughter to rub his limbs with a clothes brush, which she did. Mr. Pierson then asked Mrs. Folger if she would be willing to give him an enema; she replied, yes, that she could do that and administer several other remedies which would promote his recovery, if she was allowed. Seeing Mr. Matthias advancing to the room, she said to Mr. Pierson, ask him, and then left the room. She did so, apprehending that Mr. P. would be less urgent in her presence, as they were acquainted with her views with regard to sickness and its remedies, which exposed her to their mutual censure whenever advanced. Mrs. Folger occupied herself in the duties of the house, expecting directions from Mr. Matthias or Mr. Pierson; but none

came, nor does she know what passed between them. She again went to his room towards the middle of the day, when Mr. Pierson immediately began to speak of his exercises in relation to receiving his father's spirit, who had been subject to similar fits as those he was afflicted with. While he was speaking Matthias came in and continued the conversation with Mr. Pierson, and Mrs. Folger retired. At noon she visited his room again. He was asleep, but restless. She visited his apartment frequently that afternoon, and he continued to sleep. While the family went to supper or tea, they heard a noise as though Mr. Pierson had fallen. Catharine and Mrs. Folger started to go to him, but Matthias forbade them, and spent some time in lecturing them for keeping this sick spirit in the house. When Matthias dismissed the table he went to Mr. Pierson's room; Mrs. Folger followed him. Mr. Pierson was lying on the floor, with his feet towards the bed, as though he had risen from bed, and then fallen. He was then apparently asleep. Mrs. Folger asked Matthias if he should be lifted on his bed. He replied, no—that he seemed to have a spirit that liked the floor better. Matthias then walked for a while in the yard, and on coming in, seated himself in the parlour and read the newspapers. Mrs. Folger remained with Mr. Pierson to watch him, while his daughter, who had been with him most of the day, walked in the yard with the rest of the children. Mrs. Folger again asked Matthias if Mr. Pierson might not be placed upon his bed; he made no reply for some minutes, and

then said, we could put his straw bed on the floor, and lay him on that; but not to bring his mattress out of the room, as it was defiled, and he did not know but that every thing in the room would have to be burned. Mrs. Folger called the coloured woman to make his bed upon the floor. She likewise called Catharine to assist, but she refused. Mr. Pierson was then laid upon the bed, and left to sleep for the night. His breakfast on this (Monday) morning, consisting of coffee, bread, and shad, was taken to him by Matthias, and was the last meal he ever ate.

"The next morning, Tuesday, August 5th, he was insensible, his eyes closed, but his mouth open. Mrs. Folger asked Matthias if any thing should be done for Mr. Pierson. He said, no; that he (Matthias) was attending to his own business, and watching Mr. Pierson's spirit.

"Mrs. Folger asked if she might give him drink, or wet his lips, as they appeared dry; he said, no—he did not need any. Mrs. Folger visited his room frequently to drive the flies from him, and anxiously watched for the return of his senses.

"This morning, after the arrival of the steamboat from New York, a Jewess, whom Mr. Pierson had previously assisted, came from town to ask for his aid. Mr. Matthias, who had likewise become acquainted with her, and her mother and sister, through Mr. Pierson, received, and spent much of the day and evening in conversing with her. She asked to see Mr. Pierson, and was told she should, but he continued his conversation without showing

The following is a memorandum found among Mr. Pierson's papers, in the handwriting of Mr. Folger. It shows how entirely the delusion had fastened upon his own mind, more strongly even than according to his own relation, if that be possible.

Saturday, January 18, 1834. This morning we left Zion Hill for New-York city, with directions from Father to call upon Mr. M. at the Bloomingdale asylum on the way. In conformity therewith we called, and had an interview with him late in the afternoon. After an exchange of the ordinary salutations, we proceeded to deliver the message we had received from the Father, Robert Matthias, namely: The Father's house has been established upon a permanent foundation, at the place which was called Mr. Folger's near Singsing. We have been directed to say to you, that you are now required to leave this place, and come there, where you will be made welcome and happy: provision having been made for you and your children."

The journey of Mr. Folger to Albany, early in January, 1834, to bring the family of Matthews to Mount Zion, has been detailed by him, and is in entire accordance with the statement of the same transaction by Mrs. Matthews herself. It will be recollected that Mrs. M. declined going with her children, who were accompanied by their sister, Mrs. Laisdell, then recently married. Receiving no intelligence from his wife, Laisdell followed her to Singsing, where he arrived on or about the first of February. Applying at the house of Mr. Pierson, he was informed that his wife was with her father in New-York. He pursued them to the city, sought out the house in Third-street, and demanded her restoration; but Matthews evaded the requisition, and returned with his daughter to Singsing. Laisdell returned also, and, by the advice of friends,

sued out a writ of Habeas Corpus. Public indignation was raging fiercely at Singsing against the impostor, and on hearing of the treatment his daughter had received at his hands, the manifestations of a popular out-breaking, unless she should be set at liberty, were unequivocal. The citadel was besieged, and by the demonstrations of civil officers, clergymen, lawyers, and resolute yeomen, they succeeded in compelling the arch-fanatic to yield her up in obedience to the writ. Matthews, his daughter, and Mr. Folger were thereupon brought before a magistrate in the village, on the 17th of February. At the commencement of the investigation, the former claimed Mrs. Laisdell as his daughter. Her husband then produced the certificate of their marriage, signed by Frederick G. Mayer, pastor of the Lutheran congregation in Albany. Matthews pronounced the minister to be a devil, protesting that the devil could not marry. He was violent and vociferous as usual when excited, and uttered many other expressions of rudeness and profanity, in the earlier stage of the proceedings; but as a vast multitude of people had collected, a portion of whom began to assume a threatening attitude, he changed his conduct to that of mildness and circumspection. Laisdell said he did not wish his wife to return with him unless agreeable to her own wishes. It was proposed that she should go into a separate room and converse with him, to which she consented; but her resolution was changed instantaneously by a single glance of her father's eye; "there was no use in it," she said, and she did not wish to go with

her husband. The magistrate, however, doubtless believing that the father was the diabolical spirit, rather than the minister who had married them, directed the young woman to be surrendered to her husband. The people were greatly exasperated; and but for the prudence of the judge and counsel employed on the occasion, the prophet would have been stripped of his sacerdotals, and shorn of his beard, and all other fantastical appendages: a substitute would have been found in a robe of tar and feathers. Mr. Folger applied to the court for protection for himself and family on their return home, a distance of about two miles, being convinced that they were exposed to danger. The people, however, assured him that his wife and himself had nothing to fear; but it was only with great difficulty that they were restrained from laying violent hands on the impostor. But good sense and self-respect prevailed in the end; a carriage was procured, and the parties were suffered to leave without molestation. Matthews had been very insolent to the court, in the beginning of the investigation, and the judges had only been deterred from committing him for a contempt, by the desire of preventing popular tumult and violence. Matthews was not insensible to his personal peril, and trembled like an aspen leaf while those who were anxious to preserve the public peace were leading him to his carriage.

It was the custom of Matthews to ride out in his "chariot" almost daily, while residing at Singsing; and as he made all the purchases, and laid in all the supplies for the establishment at Mount Zion,

his visits to the village were frequent; but he usually met, when there, with those expressions of reprehension and disgust which he deserved—repelling them with the bitterest cursings, and his wonted absurd threatenings respecting his power to inflict chastisement upon the offenders. But those outpourings of his distempered spirit were regarded only with emotions of contempt. Meantime, he was amply supplied with money: he directed the purchase and sale of horses at his pleasure—procured every luxury he desired, and seemed to revel with a sway uncontrolled in the paradise which his deluded followers had placed at his disposal.

Mr. Folger and his family had been sincerely respected at Singsing, and deservedly so. The sympathy for his situation was great; while for Matthews, but one sentiment—that of universal disgust—was entertained. He was considered by all classes as an interloper upon Mr. Folger, who would ruin his peace of mind, his reputation, and, probably, his eternal prospects. Many remonstrances were urged upon Mr. Folger, and he was faithfully and affectionately advised to discard him, but without avail. At one time, he returned to Mount Zion from the city with his soul on fire, apparently, and with his eyes open as to his real situation; to his friends he declared Matthews to be a gross impostor, and promised to eject him forthwith; asking advice and assistance of them, if necessary. But on entering the charmed castle, he became spell-bound, and was unmanned. Deeming it a favourable moment to dismiss the impostor, a few

friends of Mr. F. waited on him that evening, and urged the fulfilment of his purpose; but he begged them to leave him, and the next day declared, "*Matthias's doctrines must be true, or I am a ruined man!*" At this point human endurance was at an end, and he was frankly told that the impostor must leave the county that day, or violent measures would be taken to remove him.

Matthews, ever alive to approaching danger, made instant preparations for his departure to the city; but several individuals determined upon having a frolic at his expense before his flight, for which purpose matters were well arranged. Just as he was about to step into his chariot, he was arrested by a pretended officer, accompanied by several associates to enforce his authority. Matthews demanded a sight of the precept, but the counterfeit officer declined exhibiting it. They returned into the house to converse upon the subject. But the moment they had succeeded in getting Matthews within doors, the keys were turned. After a parley of some duration, the prophet consented to go to the village. The supposed officer then gravely informed him of a conspiracy to divest him of his beard. He stated that there were a party of fellows in ambush by the way, determined to seize him and cut off his beard before he should enter the village; and he kindly advised him to take off his beard before he left the house. It was a sore trial for Matthews, for the beard of Mahomet himself was not more sacred in his own eyes, or in those of his followers. Being convinced, however, that discretion was the better part of valour, he at length

yielded to the suggestion, and the officer himself condescended to perform the operation of divesting him at once of his glory and his strength. He was then taken to the village as in custody, and after being exhibited beardless to the people, was discharged on the ground of a defect in the warrant. In this predicament he fled to the city, and took refuge in Third-street, as related in the narrative of Mr. Folger.

The history is now resumed at the point where it was left by the narrative referred to. With the absence of the impostor himself, and the return of reason and reflection, Mr. Folger and his wife now began every hour to perceive, more and more clearly, the strange delusion by which they had so long and so fatally been influenced. Every moment also increased the abhorrence and detestation with which they looked upon the character of the impostor. Recalling all the circumstances of the case—the conduct of Matthews at the table, when he refused to partake of the fruit which they supposed to have caused the death of Pierson—remembering, moreover, his threats towards themselves, when he perceived his power over their imaginations was departing, and the sickness which had followed those threats upon every member of the family who partook of the coffee, which neither Matthews nor the cook, who was his disciple, would themselves taste —strange misgivings now took possession of their minds, that Mr. Pierson might have died by foul means, and that an attempt, by poison, had been made upon their own lives. In any event, it was now manifest that they had been most shamefully

deluded and swindled by the false pretences of the impostor, and, after consulting with his friends, on the 19th of September, Mr. Folger caused an advertisement to be inserted in the papers, offering a reward of one hundred dollars for the apprehension of Matthews; in consequence of which he was arrested at Albany, where he had taken lodgings on escaping from New-York—visiting his wife, more like a stranger than a husband, and making no provision for her support. On his person were found five hundred and five dollars in gold, part of the money obtained from Mr. Folger, and the gold watch, chain, &c., which had also been obtained from him. The circumstances were these:—In January, 1834, Matthews informed him that a watch which had been given to him by Mr. Pierson had been taken from him, and that it was his (Folger's) duty to give him another, which he accordingly did—purchasing a new gold watch, with chain, seal, and key, of the value of one hundred and fifteen dollars, for the purpose. Information of his arrest, under the advertisement, having been received from Albany, accompanied by an intimation that unless demanded by legal process, he would be set at liberty, Mr. Folger, with his counsel, went before one of the police magistrates and made a deposition, embracing not indeed the whole particulars of his connection with Matthews, but sufficient to bring the latter within the operation of the law, and far more, as may well be imagined, than sufficient to prove him either a raving madman, or one of the most impudent and shameless impostors that ever existed.

A warrant was issued upon the strength of this deposition, with which an officer was despatched to Albany, and by virtue of which the impostor was speedily brought to New-York.

Among other articles found with him when arrested, was a very beautiful two-edged sword, which he called the sword of Gideon, and which, he declared, was miraculously preserved and put into his possession. On examining it, however, it exhibited strong marks of having once belonged to, or at least been made for, an officer of the United States army, as the blade of it was inscribed with the national motto, "*E pluribus unum.*" Along with this sword was found a six-feet rule, marked like a carpenter's scale, which, the impostor said, was to measure the New Jerusalem, in order to divide it into lots for such as believed in and assisted to support him. But the antiquity of the scale was also disproved on examination, by the inscription "*Kutz, maker, No.* 164 *Water-street, New-York.*" Along with these articles was a large gold key, or at least a key that looked like gold, which, he stated, was given him to unlock the gates of heaven. The officer also brought with his prisoner two large trunks and a carpet-bag—the latter filled with new boots, shoes, and pumps, and the former with linen and wearing apparel of the richest and most costly description. Linen shirts of exquisite fineness, the wristbands fringed with delicate lace, silk stockings and handkerchiefs, kid and other gloves, and a great variety of similar articles filled one of the trunks; while the other contained his gold-mounted cocked

hat, an olive cloak of the finest texture, lined throughout with velvet and silk; a new green and brown frock-coat of similar quality, the former heavily embroidered with gold, and the latter with silver, in the form of stars, with a large sun on one breast and seven stars on the other; two merino morning-dresses; and other rich et cæteras "too tedious to mention." But the rarest articles of all were two night-caps, made of linen cambric, folded in the form of a mitre, richly embroidered—one with the names of the twelve apostles written around it, and "Jesus Matthias" adorning the front in more conspicuous characters; the other surrounded with the names of the twelve tribes, the front embellished the same as the other. The whole betokened the utmost extravagance and lavish expenditure of money and labour; and *months* must have been spent by female hands (probably those of some one or more of his disciples) in ornamenting and making up the apparel of this dainty impostor.

Some days intervened after his arrival in New-York before an examination could be held. Meantime, and during the absence of Matthews at Albany, the death of Mr. Pierson had been followed by no small degree of excitement at Singsing. A multitude of rumours were in circulation, and a legal investigation into the causes of his death was commenced. The body of the deceased was disinterred at Morristown, and, on a *post mortem* examination, several respectable physicians certified "that they found in the stomach a large quantity of an unwholesome and deadly substance, which had been intro-

duced accidentally or otherwise." The publication of these facts had of course increased the excitement upon the subject in New-York and elsewhere.

On the morning of his examination, however, a scene occurred in his apartment, which it is necessary to describe, in order to the farther illustration of his own character, and also to disclose a new circumstance in the history, as connected with Mr. Pierson. While waiting for the commencement of the proceedings, Mr. W——, a counsellor in the interest of Mr. Folger, and who, in the course of his professional business, had known much of the connection of Matthews with Pierson and his client, stepped into the apartment in which the prisoner was detained, seating himself, and taking not the least notice of him. Matthews knew the gentleman perfectly, but for a time affected ignorance—striding about the apartment with affected dignity, and exclaiming "devil!—devil!" evidently with the design of provoking remark, or at least of attracting attention. Failing in this, he all at once changed his manner, and approached the gentleman with comparative courtesy, remarking:—

"Mr. W——, I believe?"

"Well," replied the gentleman, with indifference, "what should you think about it?"

"Why," rejoined the impostor, with an arch wink of the eye and a sardonic grin, "I—I—should think it was."

The gentleman then spoke to him thus: "Now, Matthias, you know *me* very well, and you know that *I* know *you* very well. You need not, there-

fore, put on any of your airs, as I shall not regard them, or reverence your godship."

Upon this salutation, Matthews lowered his pretensions, and began to converse like any other man. He inquired what people said of him out of doors; what they said of Pierson's death; and what of his connection with it; and other questions of the like general character. To all which an indifferent answer of not having heard, or not knowing much about it, was returned. Matthews, however, was for once communicative, and expressed a desire to talk over the whole subject. And here, for the due understanding of the case, and in justice to another party, it must be observed, that Mrs. * * *, the original author of the whole chain of fanatical measures which had prepared the way for Matthews, had never herself become one of his followers. She had brought the delusion upon Mr. and Mrs. Pierson and the other associates, but she would never join the prophet, and, indeed, she endeavoured to dissuade others from following him. And Matthews, on his part, was jealous of her influence, at times, over Pierson—considering her a rival of himself.

With this explanation, we proceed: Matthews said to Mr. W——, that Pierson would not have died, had he not lost his faith in him. He then mentioned that about a fortnight before his sickness Pierson made a visit to the residence of the lady referred to, then living in the country, and on his return to the house in Third-street, he (Matthews) discovered that he (Pierson) was losing his faith in

him: that when he (Pierson) came up to Singsing, just previous to his sickness, he perceived that the spirit of truth was departing from him: he was still losing his confidence in him, &c. &c. The prophet then proceeded to relate the circumstances of the picking of the blackberries by himself and his son John; but he added, that having discovered that there was a curse upon the blackberries that season, he neither ate any of them himself, nor permitted his son to eat any. He dwelt upon the subject at large; and concluded this branch of his discourse by declaring, that notwithstanding the curse upon the fruit, yet that Pierson might nevertheless have been saved, but for his want of faith in him—hinting evidently at the transfer of his faith to some one else; a matter that was well understood.

Having thus got into conversation with him, the gentleman determined to indulge his curiosity for the moment, by inquiring into the origin of his prophetic character. He asked him, "Matthias, how long is it since you supposed that there was something peculiar in your character, or have you but recently discovered it?"

Matthews then came and sat down by his side, placing his hand familiarly upon him, and went into the whole subject. He said that some years previous to his removing to Albany, when alone one day at Fort Miller, he had a revelation of his extraordinary character, which revelation was afterward repeated at Albany. But by this time he began to soar into the clouds again. He stated that on a certain day, while walking down South Market-

street, suddenly he had a view of the New Jerusalem—the folding gates of which spontaneously opened at his approach. A sort of mist at first obscured his vision, but that soon passed away, and he stood amid the blazing glories of the place—radiant with ineffable light. He proceeded to give a gorgeous description of the splendour which shone and flashed above and around him; and in conclusion declared that he then and there first received his commission in the cause of temperance, and to break down all secret societies. Immediately thereafter he commenced his ministry.

This was on the 1st day of October, and the time of proceeding to business having arrived, the examination was had before Mr. Justice Wyman, the presiding magistrate; his manner was subdued, and he answered the questions put to him in a mild low tone of voice. The following is the substance of his statements, almost literally in his own words.

"My name is Matthias, which is the name I inherited from my father; I am forty-six years old, and was born at Cambridge, Washington county, in this state. I am a traveller, but Zion Hill is my legal home. I am a Jewish teacher, a priest of the Most High—preaching, saying, and doing all that I do under oath, by virtue of having subscribed to all the covenants that God has made unto man, from the beginning of the world—chief high-priest of the Jews, after the order of Melchisedeck,—the last chosen of the apostles and the first of the resurrection, which is at the end of 2300 years after the building of Jerusalem by Cyrus, and 1260 after the

birth of the false prophet Mahomet, whose power ended in 1830. I am now denouncing a judgment on the Gentiles, which is to be executed in this present age. All the blood, from Zechariah to the death of the last witness, is required of this generation, and before this generation passeth away, the judgment shall be fulfilled. I am the spirit of truth, and I declare these things, and that the hour of God's judgment is at hand.

"In my character of preacher, I have endeavoured to impress all men with the truth and importance of the doctrines I have just stated, but not more upon Mr. Folger than others.

"I have never told him that I possessed the power of life and death, and the remission of sins; nor that if he believed in me he would be saved, and if he did not that he would be damned. But I have declared to him and to all, that they must obey the dictates of the spirit of truth in all things, as did Jesus of Nazareth. I say that my person is a trumpet whereby the spirit of truth speaks, and declares that all must believe in that spirit and obey its dictates, whereby they will be saved; and that if they do not, they will be damned.

"In all my preaching, and especially to strangers, I have always declared that I could receive nothing from them as a gift of their property, but that, if they believed themselves to have property which belonged to God, they might give it to me, if they pleased, as his servant; and I have never received any thing in any other way from any person, since I began to preach the everlasting gospel. Mr. Fol-

ger, Mr. Pierson, and Mr. M. said they believed me to be the Father, qualified and ordained to establish the kingdom of God upon earth; and for that purpose Zion Hill was made over to me, with all the furniture, carriages, and other things belonging to it; the furniture and other things in the house No. 8 Third-street, in this city, were also made over to me, and the house itself was to be made over also, but Mr. Pierson died before the deed was executed. A bill in Chancery was afterward filed against me, and I consented to restore the property; but I still claim it for the purpose of establishing God's kingdom upon earth, as the beginning of which it was originally conveyed to me.

"In June or July, 1833, as near as I can recollect, Mr. Folger invited me to make his house my home, and I did reside with him a short time—that was before the property was transferred to me.

"I have received from him at various times gold in exchange for bank notes of my own; there were various money transactions between him, and Mr. Pierson, and me, in which we accommodated each other as occasion required. I have received money from Mr. Folger at different times, to what amount I cannot say precisely, but I remember that at one time I had of him the sum of twenty-seven hundred dollars. From him and Mr. Pierson I have received in all about ten thousand dollars, but five thousand of this were in a bond and mortgage originally given to secure Mrs. Folger that sum of her own separate estate, and afterward transferred to me. All the money I received has been expended in furnish-

ing the establishments at Zion Hill, and No. 8 Third-street, and in defraying the expenses at both those houses. I acted in all these matters in perfect good faith, as the Father. Mr. Folger has the bills of all the payments I made."

After this examination he was committed for trial. But in consequence of the appearance of the examination in the morning papers, at full length, Mr. Folger made the following communication through the Commercial Advertiser of the following day :—

TO THE PUBLIC.

I had intended, by the advice of several judicious friends, not to have noticed any of the statements of the impostor Matthias, or of the wild rumours growing out of the delusion I have been under in reference to him ; but as the statements made by him in his examination before the Police yesterday, as published in the morning papers, are calculated to injure me seriously, I think it best to deny those statements, the object of them, with Matthias, being, no doubt, to crush me if possible. I have no objection that Matthias, or any one else, should state the *whole truth* in reference to any transaction of mine, but that which is totally untrue I must protest against, and, when necessary, meet and refute.

Matthias stated in his examination yesterday, that on one occasion he received from me $2,700 ; this is true as far as it goes ; but the whole truth is this : that early in the present year I sold a property, for which the party paid me about three o'clock —too late to be deposited in the bank that afternoon. I was going to Hartford that afternoon in the steamboat, and fearing to take it in my pocket, I left it in his charge for safe-keeping until my return, which was in about forty-eight hours ; so that he did in fact *receive* $2,700 from me, and kept it until I returned, when I received it again from him.

The statement about a mortgage of $5,000, either on my place at Singsing, or any other property to secure that sum to the estate of Mrs. Folger, is totally untrue. No such mortgage was ever given.

As it regards Mr. Pierson having directed that a deed of Third-street property should be given, it is entirely new to me—and he is not living to state what he did say to Matthias. I know nothing about it, but I do not think he ever directed it, for

the simple reason, that when he is said to have done it I was largely in advance to him in joint speculations, and he knew that I felt no disposition to be any more so. All I ask of my friends is, to be cautious in receiving the statements of this deceitful creature, and leave me to manage all my concerns with him. To all who are interested I can exhibit a perfectly clear statement of my concerns, and satisfy them that I have and shall act uprightly with all men.

BENJAMIN H. FOLGER.

On the 16th of October, Matthews was arraigned before the Court of Sessions, on an indictment found by the Grand Jury, setting forth in substance that "The said Robert Matthias, devising and intending by unlawful ways and means to obtain possession of the moneys, goods, chattels, and effects of divers good people of the state of New-York, and to defraud and cheat Benjamin H. Folger, did falsely pretend that he was God the Father—had power to forgive sins and to communicate the Holy Ghost, and that if the said B. H. Folger would provide him with money, he the said B. H. Folger would have God's blessing. That the said B. H. Folger believing those representations, gave the said Matthias one hundred pieces of gold coin, of the value of five hundred and thirty dollars, and one hundred dollars in bank notes, which the said Matthias feloniously received by means of the false pretences aforesaid."

Matthews by his counsel pleaded not guilty, waving whatever legal objections might be taken to the indictment, and the trial was postponed until the November term. Something was said by the prisoner's counsel in the nature of an application for his discharge on bail, but the district attorney intimating that a warrant had been issued in Westchester county against Matthews on a capital charge (for the

murder of Mr. Pierson) the application was not persisted in, and he was remanded to prison.

On the 8th of November he was again placed at the bar of the court, dressed in his richest and most fantastic garb, with his pink-lined green coat, crimson sash, lace-ruffles at his wristbands, a silver sun upon the left and stars of the same metal on the right side of his breast. He appeared cheerful, and conversed freely with those about him.

The District Attorney intimated to the court that he had strong doubts whether the indictment could be sustained, even admitting that the allegations set forth in it could be established. He had laid all the facts in his possession before the Grand Jury, and stated to them his doubts as to their constituting an indictable offence, but they had thought it their duty to find the bill. There were two difficulties in the case; to make out an indictable offence, it would be necessary to show, first, that the representations made by Matthews were such as were calculated to impose on a man of ordinary prudence and understanding, and, second, that they were false; and both these matters he thought it would be impossible to prove. Things might be averred which the majority of the community would never believe—absurdities at which reason revolted; but where was the testimony to *prove* them false? So far as the prosecutor was concerned, he had to say that the gentleman did not wish the case to proceed any farther; and here the District Attorney read the following note from Mr. Folger to his counsel,

"*New-York, Oct.* 23, 1834.

"DEAR SIR,

"Mr. Hoffman, as I understand you, having expressed strong doubts in regard to the indictment against Matthias being sustained, and it being likewise your own, as well as that of several other lawyers, in whose opinions I have confidence, I think it would be best to discontinue the proceedings altogether. If you think it is proper, do so; I should think it would be best to ask the District Attorney to dismiss the case—the offence charged upon him not being an indictable one—and release the creature entirely. His day—so far as passing himself for a *pure* and *upright* man—has passed, and there is no danger of his imposing upon any one here or elsewhere.

"With respect and esteem, yours,

"BENJAMIN H. FOLGER"

After reading this document, the District Attorney, saying that he believed the indictment could not be sustained, and that farther inquiry would only tend to make Mr. Folger and his family more unhappy than they were already, moved the Court to enter a *nolle-prosequi*. The Court said they would look into the indictment, and decide on the following Monday whether the case should or should not be proceeded in.

In the afternoon of the same day the following note from Mr. Folger appeared in the Commercial Advertiser.

New-York, November 8, 1834.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—I am informed by my friends that the notice in the morning papers of the proceedings in Court in reference to Matthias, has led some to suppose that I have relapsed into a belief in him and his blasphemous doctrines. Lest it should be so supposed, you will do me a favour to state distinctly in your paper of this evening that I have long since renounced his doctrines entirely, and believe him to be one of the most base and deceitful beings on earth. This is likewise the opinion of every member of my family, and my object is now to rid myself of him and those connected with him, with as little trouble as possible. Mr. Pierson, myself, and family, have been

deeply, very deeply deluded, deceived, and imposed upon; and I regret exceedingly that the former could not have been spared to witness the deep deception. We are sensible of our error—we repent it sincerely; and although we cannot expect to recover, at present, the situation which we held in society previous to our acquaintance with this vile creature, yet, in time, we shall be able to show that we are enemies to him, and all who undertake to sustain him in his wickedness and plans to destroy us.

BENJAMIN H. FOLGER.

On Tuesday, the 11th of November, the Recorder, presiding in the Court of Sessions, on being applied to by the District Attorney for the decision of the court in the matter of the indictment, stated that he had that morning received a warrant from a justice of the peace in the county of Westchester, with an endorsement thereon by James Hopson, one of the police magistrates of the city of New-York, to whom it had been sent (according to the requisition of the statute), allowing the same to be served in the city. That the court had taken the whole matter into consideration, and had arrived at the unanimous conclusion that it would become them to yield the prisoner first for trial on the graver charge; if he should be acquitted on that, it would then be time for the court to act on the minor indictment.

This course was very strenuously opposed by the counsel for the prisoner, but their arguments failed to shake the determination of the court, and Matthews was accordingly surrendered into the custody of the sheriff of Westchester.

The legal proceedings that have recently taken place respecting him in that county will form the subject of the ensuing chapter. Meantime, there

are two or three matters belonging to the history, which will be disposed of in the present.

From the bankruptcy of Mr. Folger, and the melting away of the estate of Mr. Pierson, it has been supposed that Matthews was himself the swindler. Such, however, is probably not the fact, to any greater extent than the amount of money extorted by him from his disciples, to lavish in procuring the fantastical decorations of his person, and the means of his voluptuous living. Mr. Folger estimates his loss, directly, by his association with Matthews, at four thousand five hundred dollars. His failure was produced, first, by the withdrawal of bank accommodations, in consequence of the peculiar state of mind under which he appeared to be labouring, and, secondly, by the failure of a friend for whom he was an endorser. The following letter from him to one of the household at Singsing, stated, and doubtless truly, the immediate cause of his stopping payment. It also throws some light upon the condition of his own mind at the time. It is rather light and gay for a devotee, and the concluding paragraph shows that the community at Mount Zion were not ignorant of the opinions of the world as to the disordered state of their intellects. It is without date, but must have been written early in March, 1834 :—

"'Well, Tommy, how does thee do, now-a-days?'

"'Sad, sad enough, Benjamin, for the *bottom is all out!*'

"The above was my salutation of Tommy F——, the first time I met him after his failure. I am reminded of it just now by the great muss things are getting into here. Mr. ——, very unexpectedly to *me*, and himself too, determined upon stopping

to-day: but upon my insisting that he should *demand* from the holders of the note due to-day an extension, that I might have time to put things right, he did it; and I shall continue to pay until Wednesday or Saturday. Mr. ——'s failure will be a very bad one. He will not be able to protect me or anybody else in our endorsements, and there is not, therefore, any escape that I can see, but that I must stop, and a half-dozen others. But, of course, this is for the *court* only. I have written Judge K—— a letter this evening, and I send enclosed a copy of it, which please read and burn.

"It is quiet in Third-street, when Mrs. A—— is out of the room (but never when she is in it), as a churchyard; and, as I am rather inclined to a quiet turn of mind, it is delightful! One month of it, I should think, would knock the bottom out of Jew or Gentile.

"*Sanity and Insanity.*—Everybody thinks his neighbour mad, if his pursuits happen to be opposite to his own. His neighbour thinks the same of him: but then these two kinds of madness do not interfere with each other. Then there comes an eccentric man, who, taking a just view of things, thinks them all mad—him they would lock up. I appoint Edward to kiss the whole tribe for me. I am the same

ONE."

Mr. Folger failed, as he foresaw he must do when he wrote this letter, and from the causes mentioned therein and elsewhere.

Mr. Pierson and Mr. Folger both suffered in their estates very severely, from other causes, one of which tells a darker tale of human depravity, than (aside from the conduct of Matthews) has been recorded yet in the present volume. There is no doubt of the fact, that there were a set of thoroughbred knaves hanging about the skirts of Pierson and Folger—more especially the former—a knot of harpies, who, availing themselves of the delusion by which those gentlemen were blinded, sported with their credulity under pretext of joining the association, but in reality to plunder them of their property.

Such an impression has long been entertained by those conversant with their pecuniary concerns, and when circumstances previously known are compared with some of the private, but imperfect, memoranda left by Mr. Pierson, the proof is as clear as could be desired, that there was indeed a combination of robbers who plundered them, though the evidence is not exactly such as can bring home the facts, in a legal form, to a court and jury. The loose papers just referred to, contain various entries of moneys advanced, or rather given, to these people. To one individual, on a certain occasion, he gave the sum of one thousand dollars, by direction, as he supposed, of the Holy Spirit, and with a promise from the same source that he should receive three fold in return. Pierson and Folger were likewise inveigled into various unfortunate speculations in patented inventions, by which many sums of money were lost. What some of these unlucky adventures were, the reader will discover by the following prayer, taken from the papers of the former:—

Nov. 12*th*, 1833. Spirit of Truth! guide us into the right way concerning the globe stove, self-loading cart, [and] planing machine. Manifest thy mind concerning these things, that we may know and do thy pleasure.

I ask that the evil spirits may have no power to hinder the successful and beneficial operation of these things.

O Lord God, let not the enemies triumph over us, but send help, such as is needed.

We [I] consecrate the gain to the building of thy kingdom. Now, Lord God, hear this my prayer.

They likewise embarked to a considerable extent in speculations of real estate—always under the di-

rection of the Holy Spirit—Mr. Pierson having the vision, and Mr. Folger making the purchases and sales. These were not all unsuccessful, but no very great profits were realized. And even had there been, the avails would have been swallowed up in the stock operations which Mr. Pierson supposed he was making by the same Divine direction. The following is a copy of one of his spiritual missives, to Mr. Folger, to purchase stock:—

June 3, 1833. Wrote to B. H. Folger: "Now is the accepted time; buy three hundred shares. Let it be left with thee to sell, and I will direct. More than ten will be obtained for it. Cost, 105 per cent."

The stock was purchased, and a heavy loss was the consequence. But enough has been written upon this branch of the subject, and it is time to shift the scene.

CHAPTER IX.

Trial of Matthews before the Court of Oyer and Terminer in Westchester—First, as to the question of his sanity—Second, on the indictment for murder—Third, for the assault and battery upon his daughter, Mrs. Laisdell.

THE warrant upon which Matthews had been surrendered by the civil authorities of New-York to those of the county of Westchester, was issued upon information as to the circumstances attending Mr. Pierson's death, contained in the deposition of Mrs. Dratch—the female mentioned in the narrative of Mr. Folger, who came to their residence during the illness of the deceased, and remained there until his death. Mrs. Dratch, it will be recollected, came there for pecuniary assistance. The following is a copy of the deposition referred to:

"Mrs. Dratch testifies, that on the 11th of August, 1834, she came from New-York, with the intention of visiting Mr. Pierson, he having been many years her particular friend. When she reached his house, she saw Matthias, who appeared to be much excited, and told her that Mr. Pierson was sick, and that she could not then see him. But on repeating her request, was put off, and answered by Matthias, that when Mr. Pierson came from the bath, she might see him. When night came on, she was urged by Matthias to go to bed, which she did from fear, and slept but little, and in the morning was told that Mr. Pierson was dead, but no one could tell by what means; but she heard him utter several groans during the night, and in the morning, when she arose, was told by Matthias that he was

dead. No person in the house could tell how he came by his death, and she has the impression on her mind, that Matthias has, by some means, been instrumental in his death. And having seen the certificate of four respectable physicians, that some unwholesome or deadly substance was found in the stomach of Pierson, she founds her belief thereon that he has been poisoned, and therefore on this evidence the undersigned gave his warrant. "CHARLES YEO, Westchester county."

The reader would hardly suppose from the terms of this deposition, that the informant was on such apparently friendly terms with Matthews, during the illness of her friend and benefactor, as appeared to be the case while she was there. Still, upon such testimony, and from the evidence of the physicians who examined the body of the deceased,* the Grand Jury was unquestionably right in finding a bill.

Thursday the 16th of April, 1835, was assigned for the trial of Matthews on the indictment for the murder of Mr. Pierson, but on account of the absence of witnesses the case was deferred until the next day. On returning from the Court to the jail, he was asked how he felt, and answered, "I feel that the Lord is my stay, and will be my exceeding great reward—like gold seven times refined shall I come out of this fiery furnace; but as I have lost my dinner, I am now hungry and weak, and should like to have a bite of something." He refused to shake hands with any person, saying, "Know ye not that it is written, 'touch not the prophet of the Lord?'" A young man coming to the door of his cell expressed a wish "to have a peep at the old

* For the statement of Dr. Condit, written by himself for this work, see Appendix.

and became good for nothing himself; and that Pierson's palsy had resulted from the loss of his spirit. Dr. Rogers concurred with Dr. Paine in looking upon Matthews as an insane man.

Dr. Myers also entertained the same opinion, forming it from the prisoner's language and wild notions. The prisoner had alleged himself to be Jesus Christ; said that heaven and hell were in every man's breast; that the angels were subject to him (Matthews), and he would send them where he pleased, &c.

Several other witnesses, not of the medical profession, were of the same opinion as to the prisoner's insanity.

Andrew Wight, of the city of New-York, stated that he had known Matthews for twenty years (Matthews having married his sister), and had lived with him about two years. This was soon after prisoner's marriage. He had not seen him after this, until he visited him in Albany, about seven years ago, when witness found him very enthusiastic and somewhat wild on the subject of religion and temperance; said that he had got a new light; abstained from animal food, and subsisted upon fruits and vegetables. Witness did not see him again until three years afterward, when he wore his peculiar dress and beard, but was perfectly sane, so far as witness could judge. Witness told him he ought not to have abandoned his family, whereupon Matthews grew very angry, consigned him to the devil, and said that he had burned his fingers by coming

to witness's house. Witness was now disposed to think him partially deranged.

The first witness called by the prosecuting attorney, was Mr. Anderson, who said he had seen Matthews six or eight times, but had never had much conversation with him until the preceding Saturday. The result of the conversation was an impression that Matthews was perfectly sane, except on the subject of religion.

Edward D. Johnson thought Matthews sane and a rogue; was led to this opinion by detecting an expression in his eye, while in conversation, which convinced him that Matthews was an impostor; there was a roll in his eye when excited, which gave place to a fixedness when he wanted to evade an answer, as if he were glancing through a train of argument, and when he came to the end of it his eye would roll again.

Joseph Miller believed Matthews an enthusiast and an impostor, but not an insane man. Matthews had told him that he was present when the Bible was written.

Rev. Nathaniel S. Prime had known Matthews in Washington County in 1813 or 1814, and had seen him two or three times in Singsing within the last year and a half: considered him a sane man: had seen him exhibit fear when in a situation of personal danger, and this he considered a strong test of sanity.

Jesse Bishop had often seen Matthews at Singsing, and had commercial dealings with him; found him sharp at a bargain, and that he managed his af-

fairs well. Could see no difference between him and other men, when he chose to behave rationally.

Doctors Paine and Rogers being recalled by the prisoner's counsel, stated that insane persons are generally more easily intimidated than men of right mind. After which the jury were charged by the court, retired to their room, and returned in about five minutes with a verdict that the prisoner was not insane. The opinion of the writer on the question thus decided by the jury, will be expressed elsewhere.

On Friday, the 17th, he was again brought up for trial on the indictment, and, after the facts expected to be proved had been stated by the District Attorney, Jesse Bishop was called as the first witness. He stated that he had known the prisoner and Mr. Pierson at Singsing, his residence being within a mile and a half of that place. Mr. Pierson and the prisoner appeared to have the control of the establishment. Witness saw the dead body of Mr. Pierson, about the first week in August, laid out on a board, in a room in the south part of Mr. Folger's house. It was covered with a sheet; the eyes and mouth were open. The prisoner, Mrs. Folger, the woman named Catharine, Mr. Pierson's daughter Elizabeth, and a hired man named Louis Basil, were also present. Witness went there at the written request of the prisoner, to assist in burying Mr. Pierson. There were bruises on the knees of the body, but otherwise it was in a natural condition. One of the hands was closed, but there was no distortion of the eyes or of the limbs. Witness had heard

the prisoner direct Pierson about a job of work as he would a hired man. Heard him on one occasion order Pierson to remove some poles, and when it was not done promptly, the prisoner said, "when he wanted a job done, he wished it done thoroughly." Witness once saw Mr. Pierson and the prisoner on the road, going towards the house, the former walking before the latter, who was riding one horse and leading another, which was saddled. Did not perceive any traces of ill-will between them.

Moses Cheny stated that he was sexton, and had charge of the burying-ground at Morristown in New-Jersey, in which Mr. Pierson was interred on the 8th of August. About ten days afterward the body was exhumed, and examined by Dr. Condit, who took out the stomach and carried it away. The body was then buried again, but taken up once more, five or six weeks before the trial, and examined by other physicians.

Dr. Lewis Condit stated that the body of Mr. Pierson was disinterred in his presence on the 18th of August. The surface was of a dark chocolate colour, and the face nearly black. He took out the stomach, which seemed less changed than any of the surrounding parts. Its texture was firm and unimpaired—when first viewed it was contracted into a small mass and apparently empty. Externally, its colour was scarcely changed, except in its anterior portion near the lower orifice, where it showed a redness. The body was very offensive, but putrefaction had not commenced in the stomach, and as

there were traces of inflammation on its outer surface, he took it home for farther examination.

On opening it, he found near the lower orifice, or *pylorus*, a substance resembling wet chalk, or calomel, of a dingy whitish colour, in quantity equal to eight or ten grains of calomel. A spot or patch of a bright red colour, about three inches in diameter, was found on the fore-part of the stomach, on the inner surface, corresponding with a similar red spot on the outside; and it was here that the whitish substance was found. Half an inch higher was another red spot, about half as large as the first, and near them both were three or four others, about the size of a twenty-five cent piece, and of a dark brown colour. The mucous membrane, or inner coat of the stomach, immediately under these spots, was soft, pulpy, and disorganized. Under this membrane extravasated blood was found, which gave the dark colour to the brown spots. The muscular coat, beneath this extravasated blood, was of a bright red colour, with increased thickness of substance, and enlargement of blood vessels. The stomach contained nothing except the powder above mentioned, and a small quantity of mucus. The stomach, with the powder, was placed in a close jar, and sent to Dr. Torrey of New-York, in order that they might be analyzed.

On the 21st of March, 1835, the body was again disinterred, and found to be considerably advanced in decay. The œsophagus, or gullet, was taken out, as were also portions of the intestines, and carried home for examination. The œsophagus was

found reddened in its upper portion, and somewhat thickened, but the remainder presented a natural appearance. The intestines were firm and unyielding, showing no traces of redness or decay. It was remarked on opening the abdomen, immediately over the intestines, that the flesh was not more decomposed than it usually is in subjects a few days after death. But little offensive odour was perceived at the grave, and that of the intestines, on opening them, was precisely like the smell of smoked herrings.

Both of the examinations were made in the presence of the same physicians, namely, Doctors Canfield, Johns, and the two Condits; and they were unanimously of opinion, after the first, that the death of Mr. Pierson was not the result of natural causes, or of any known disease, and that there was great reason to believe that it had been occasioned by some poisonous substance. This opinion was reduced to writing, and signed by them all. They were all subpœnaed to attend the trial, and all attended except Dr. Canfield; but only the two Doctors Condit were examined, and their examination was limited almost exclusively to the appearances of the stomach. They were not called upon to cite authorities, or to show the reasons on which their opinion was founded.

Dr. Nathan W. Condit was then examined, and confirmed the statements of the last witness as to the appearance of the body, stomach, œsophagus, and intestines. He was led to suspect poison, but he could not say positively that poison had been

administered. The appearances certainly indicated poison, but he should consider the detection of it necessary to produce conviction that it had been used.

[The District Attorney consented to admit that Dr. Torrey had examined the stomach of the deceased Mr. Pierson, and was unable to discover any poison in it.]

Mrs. Ann Folger was the next witness, but as her testimony corresponded fully and throughout to the statement already very minutely given in this volume, in that part of it which is indicated as the narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Folger, it is here omitted, with the exception of some few particulars not, it is believed, distinctly included in the narrative. We give them in her own language, as taken down by the reporter.

"I had heard of Matthews, and received his doctrines through Mr. Pierson, before I knew him personally. Mr. Pierson was a firm believer in his doctrines, so far as I could judge. I also became a believer in them generally; but Mr. Folger was more disposed to doubt than either Mr. Pierson or myself. Catharine Galloway was also a believer, and acted as such. Those in the house who believed in him, considered him their Father, and as God the Father, possessing the Holy Ghost, and all power to bestow his Spirit on whom he would. We also believed that he had power to execute wrath, and regarded him as the last trumpet, answering to all the angels of wrath, or executing angels spoken of in the Revelations. He claimed all

these powers; and we believed that he not only could, but did possess the power of casting out devils. He claimed this power, and averred that he *had* cast out devils. We were required to obey his commands in all things, for he said that he had a right to be obeyed. He had the command of every thing in the household. I would go to him sometimes for directions, and he would say that the spirit would direct, and then I would await his answer. If I did not conform to his wishes, he would say that although I had his spirit, I had also a spirit somewhere else. When displeased, he was exceedingly violent, of which his conduct in Court yesterday is but a faint specimen. He would curse us bitterly, and tell us we were lost creatures; and we believed him. He said he would save us, but we must get rid of the evil spirit, and have a better one, which he would give us, if we asked for it. He attended to all the temporalities of the house, and we held ourselves responsible to him for all that was done.

"In August last, when Mr. Pierson died, he claimed to own the house and property. There had been some ill-will between them, which began when Matthews was ordered away from Singsing. He censured Mr. Pierson, among other things, for not tilling the ground. He claimed the first-fruits of every thing—of the chickens, and the peas in the garden; but if he was not at home, we used them until he returned. He claimed the first of every thing at table, and had a coach and horses at his exclusive command. I was told once by him and

Mr. Pierson, that when he went out riding one day and stopped to water their horses, Mr. Pierson's horse would lie down in the brook, whereupon he got off and walked because the horse was wet. The farm was wholly managed by Matthews, and Mr. Pierson would not put any seed in the ground until directed to do so by him. Mr. Pierson died on the 5th of August, between one and two o'clock in the morning.

"When Mr. Pierson ate the blackberries, he appeared to be the special object of Matthews' censure, because he had helped himself to more than his share. It was the prisoner's ordinary practice to set food apart for himself, and any one who dipped his hand in the same dish with him was considered a Judas.

"When Mr. Pierson was ill and dying, the reason why nothing was done for him, was, because we thought the evil spirit must be mortified and tormented until it should come out of him. We all sincerely wished his recovery, but nothing was done for him except washing his head and putting him in the bath. No physician was sent for, because Matthews held that physicians, ministers, and lawyers, were the greatest evils in the world. I sincerely believed that there was no need of any medicine to cure Mr. Pierson. If I had depended on my own strength and experience, I should have resorted to the same means for his recovery that I had before been accustomed to; but my confidence was then in Matthews, who, I thought, would deliver him; and we all believed that if we cried or called might-

ily upon the Father, he would be cured. I considered myself a woman of prayer, but we were forbidden to pray to any God but Matthews. I did not think Mr. Pierson's life in danger, for I believed he would live for ever. I also believed that the last enemy to be destroyed was death, and that Matthews had come to destroy that enemy. Mr. Pierson's fits were called by Matthews 'fifty devils.' After they had become more violent at Singsing, there was a twisting of the arm and head, and he died in that position. Elizabeth, Mr. Pierson's daughter, although somewhat fickle, was obedient and affectionate to her father. She also obeyed Matthews, and was a believer.

"It was understood that the Father held all the property for the benefit of those who belonged to the kingdom. A community of interest in all the property was part of the doctrine, but no one presumed to call any part of it his or her own, except Matthews. He would often say to me, 'How dare you say so to me in my house?' He was severe and offended if the house, and every thing in it, were not called his own."

The District Attorney then produced in evidence a lease from Mr. Pierson to the prisoner, of the house and farm at Mount Zion, near Singsing, for the term of ninety-nine years, at the rent of one dollar per annum, subject to a mortgage of thirty-five hundred dollars; and a surrender of this lease, executed by the prisoner on the first of August, 1834, in favour of Elizabeth, the daughter of Mr. Pier-

son.* Also, a bill of sale of all the personal property at Mount Zion, amounting to eight hundred and ninety-one dollars and fifty-eight cents, a bill of sale and inventory of Mr. Pierson's furniture &c. in the house No. 8 Third-street, in the city of New-York, executed on the twenty-third of December, 1833. The object of these transfers, as stated in the instruments, was to aid in setting up the kingdom of God. The value of the property in New-York was stated in the inventory to be twenty-five hundred and thirty-eight dollars.

Catharine Galloway was next examined. She stated that she was the wife of a man who had lived as a servant in the house of Mr. M. H. S. while the prisoner resided there, and was a believer in him before his acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Folger: that she went to live at Mount Zion in February preceding the death of Mr. Pierson, and remained there until after his death. She firmly believed in the doctrines of Matthews, and stated them, as also his conduct, exactly as they were set forth by Mrs. Folger. She was reluctant to

* The attention of the writer has been directed to the conduct of Matthews, touching these conveyances of the real estate at Singsing, as going to prove his sanity, by a professional gentleman well acquainted with the affairs of the enthusiasts. Matthews, it is said, first took a deed of the premises; but recollecting that in the contingency of his death his widow would be entitled to dower in this estate, he gave up the deed and took the lease for ninety-nine years. This lease he had surrendered; as just mentioned in evidence, but in a conversation with the professional gentleman referred to, he declared he had been compelled to give it up under duress; the act was therefore not of legal and binding force upon him; and he avowed his determination to claim and recover the property after his release.

go into the room where the bath was ordered by Matthews for Mr. Pierson, but he looked hard at her, and she said, "Father, I will go, if you say so;" he replied, "I say so;" and she went in and assisted in bringing water. When she heard Mr. Pierson fall, she was induced to rise from her chair and say, "Father, shall I go?" and he said, "No; you are always the first to go." She accordingly sat down again. She saw Mr. Pierson while they were giving him the bath, but not again until after he was dead. She did not recollect that any quarrel had taken place between Matthews and him immediately before his death. When Matthews was displeased with any members of the community he would curse them, and say they should be chained in the bottomless pit, of which he had the key; sometimes he would threaten them with annihilation. He taught them that sickness was caused by spirits, which were to be driven out by prayer and resistance; she was treated in that way when she was ill, and so were all the other members of the household. None were permitted to have any medicine, but they were required to have faith in Matthews, who would remove all their ailments.

The testimony was here closed; the prisoner's counsel moved for his discharge, on the ground that no evidence had been produced to convict him either of murder or manslaughter; and the District Attorney replied, being several times interrupted by the prisoner, who exclaimed, "that's a lie—all a lie!" in relation to particular statements made by the gentleman. The court decided that sufficient

testimony had not been produced to carry the charge of murder to the jury, but it was proper for them to determine whether the prisoner was or was not guilty of manslaughter, as having had the control of the establishment, and stood in such a relation to the deceased as to make it his duty to provide him with proper medical attendance. The court were inclined to the opinion that a verdict of guilty could not be rendered, inasmuch as the weight of the evidence would lead to the conclusion that the death of the deceased was the result of illness with which he had been for some time afflicted, and which would probably have proved fatal even without the neglect and ill-treatment disclosed in the testimony. If it could be shown that his death was hastened by this ill-treatment, the prisoner was guilty of manslaughter in the fourth degree; but the court were of opinion that sufficient evidence had not been produced to prove that such was the case.

The counsel for the prosecution then proposed to re-examine Dr. Condit on the direct question, "Whether, in his opinion, the death of Mr. Pierson was caused by want of care, or nursing, or any of the kind offices of humanity requisite for a person in his condition?" The counsel for the prisoner objected, on the ground that Dr. Condit had not been present in court during the whole of Mrs. Folger's examination; the court sustained the objection, and the District Attorney then announced that he had no farther evidence to offer.

The court then instructed the jury that there was no evidence showing that the death of Mr. Pierson

had been caused by poison, and, in the absence of sufficient evidence to prove that it resulted from culpable neglect or ill-treatment, they would advise an acquittal; and the jury, thereupon, immediately returned a verdict of not guilty.

On the announcement of this verdict, the prisoner was evidently elated; but his countenance fell when he found that he was to be tried on another indictment for assaulting Isabella Laisdell, his daughter, with a whip. The indictment also contained a count against the prisoner for confining the said Isabella Laisdell against her will.

When the indictment was read, Matthews said, "This is another branch of the persecution against me."

Before the prisoner pleaded to the indictment, Mr. Western rose and read from a paper, as follows:—

"I hereby acknowledge that I have received full and ample satisfaction for the assault and battery in this case, for which the defendant is indicted, and I respectfully pray the court to enter a *nolle prosequi* therein, accordingly.

"ISABELLA LAISDELL.

"*White Plains, April 18th*, 1835."

The reading of this document seemed to take the District Attorney by surprise, and he requested the court to order Isabella Laisdell to appear personally in court, in order that she might be examined on the subject. The court made the necessary order, and

in a few minutes Isabella Laisdell came into court, and acknowledged that she had signed the paper, and forgave her father, and had nothing against him.

The District Attorney urged that she should be examined as to the circumstances of the reconciliation or compromise, which, after some discussion, the court assented to, and Isabella Laisdell *affirmed* and was examined on the subject.

Charles Laisdell, her husband, was then examined, and refused to concur with his wife in compromising with the prisoner.

The court then ordered the trial to proceed.

Mrs. Laisdell stated that she was eighteen years old—was the daughter of the prisoner—and was married to Charles Laisdell, at Albany, in the month of December, 1833. At the time of her marriage she was residing with her mother, her father having been away from there four or five years. She went from Albany to Singsing with her two brothers, in the care of Mr. Folger, on the 15th of January. On the morning of her arrival, her father chastised her in his room; it was on account of her saying that she would not stay at Singsing, and this she had said because he told her that her marriage was void—that she was too young to marry, but that in proper time she might get a husband. He struck her once or twice across the shoulders with a cowhide; no other person was present. The next morning Mrs. Folger came into her room, saying she wanted to speak to her; she answered that she was not very well, and felt fatigued. Mrs. Folger told her that nobody in that house believed in sick-

ness or dying, and she replied that she would die before she would believe any such doctrine. This seemed to displease Mrs. Folger, who soon left the room. A little after, her father came in, and asked what she had been saying to her mother; she answered that *her* mother was not there, and he said she must go with him and have the matter righted. He took her to his room, where she found Mrs. Folger preparing to make his bed. Mrs. Folger told him, she (Mrs. Laisdell) had said she would die rather than obey him; and her father, without allowing her time to correct the statement, raised a cowhide, which he had concealed behind his back, and struck her more than twenty blows across her shoulders; she cried out, but no one came to her relief. The blows did not draw any blood. Five or six weeks afterward there was a scar on her arm, where one of the blows took effect. Two weeks after, her father took her in his carriage to New-York, with Mr. and Mrs. Folger, to the house in Third-street. She stayed there for four weeks, and then went back to Singsing. She was not compelled to stay there, but had no money, and therefore could not go away. She was well used while she remained with her father, except in the affair of the whipping; he did not prohibit her returning to her husband. He sent for her mother to come to Singsing, but she would not come, as she did not agree with him in principles. When Mr. Laisdell came to Singsing, he was invited to the house, but did not come. The reason why her father disapproved of her marriage was, because she was too young, and

because he held that marriages were unlawful, according to the laws of God. The first whipping was given her because she was impudent to her father; the second was occasioned by misrepresentation of her words, and by her impertinence in telling him that she was married, and would do as she pleased. The whipping she considered as nothing more than the ordinary chastisement inflicted by a father upon his child for misconduct, and after it, he was as kind to her as ever. She was neither sick nor lame after either of the whippings.

Charles Laisdell, the husband of the last witness, stated that after she had been gone from Albany about three weeks, he went to Singsing. On his arrival he inquired for Matthews, and was told that he was gone to New-York. He called at Mr. Folger's house there, a few times, where he saw Catharine, the coloured girl, and Mr. Pierson's children, who ordered him away. He then went to New-York, to the house in Third-street, where he enquired for Matthews. Matthews then came to the door, and he asked to see his wife; Matthews answered that he had no wife, or that his wife was not there, and then went in and shut the door. Matthews had a sword by his side, and witness was a little alarmed. His wife was in the house at the time, but he was not allowed to enter. The next morning he went again with an officer, but found that they had all gone. He returned to Singsing, and saw Matthews, who told him his wife was at New-York, and wanted him to return to Albany;

Matthews would not let him see his wife, and said he had been married by a devil, and that henceforth none would be married but by him. His wife was afterward given up to him in Court by an officer, that being the first time he had seen her since she left Albany. She had then a sore place on her arm, from the whipping she had received six weeks before, and there were also marks on her back. Rev. Nathaniel S. Prime saw Mrs. Laisdell's arm, after she had been removed from her father's custody; the mark extended about a third of the way round the arm, it was not entirely healed.

The case was here closed, no other testimony being offered on behalf of the prisoner, and the judge then charged the jury, who retired and in a few minutes returned with a verdict of guilty. The Court then intimated to the prisoner that if he had any thing to say, he would now be heard, provided he behaved properly. He was already sentenced to thirty days imprisonment for his contempt of Court on a former occasion.

MATTHIAS then addressed the Court in a firm but seemingly somewhat subdued tone. The following are his words verbatim. "I have been confined near seven months, and nothing has been made out against me, until this last case, and this has been a great affliction to me, though I have been sustained under it, knowing that I was innocent. The things which are apparent are so because they misrepresented my doctrines."

COURT—We don't want to hear any thing about them.

MATTHIAS—You don't—I was going to terminate by saying, that feeling I was innocent I think this termination altogether extraordinary and unjust, and if it is in the power of the Court to make an offset in my favour in the latter case, I hope it will.

JUDGE RUGGLES—The prisoner was not confined on account of the present offence, but the Court have taken it into consideration in determining on the sentence. He stands convicted of an assault under peculiar circumstances: under other circumstances, if punished at all, it would be very lightly. But we find that in the very first interview with his daughter, he told her that marriages were void, and endeavoured to inculcate in her the same immoralities that he had already inculcated upon the inmates of the house. The chastisement was also inflicted without her deserving it, or allowing her to be heard. The Court sentences the prisoner to be confined three months in the county jail, from the termination of his first sentence.

To Matthias.—We now tell you that the times for practising those foolish impositions are past. The Court is satisfied that you are an impostor, and that you do not believe in your own doctrines. We advise you therefore, when you come out of jail to shave off your beard, lay aside your peculiar dress, and go to work like an honest man.

MATTHIAS—It is not true.

He was then led out of Court.

Every good man would wish, in the language of the presiding judge, that "the times for practising

such foolish impositions were past." But it will be seen by a subsequent page, that the spirit of fanaticism and delusion is not yet extinct, even in the city of New-York, notwithstanding the shocking disclosures that have been made, and the melancholy consequences.

CHAPTER X.

Traits of the Impostor's Character—A Scene in Prison—Anecdote—His Contempt of Women—Shrewd Comparison—Adroitness in evading Questions—Casting out a Devil—Conversations on his miraculous Gifts—Steamboat Scenes and Conversations—Interview with a Gentleman of Distinction—Reflections—Readiness at Repartee—Parallels between Matthews and other Impostors—Simon Magus—Montanus—John of Leyden—Cochrane—Mysterious Influence—Summing up of the Impostor's Character—A Compound of Insanity, Knavery, and Self-deception.

In more than one instance, in the course of the present work, the term *shrewdness* has been applied to the conduct of Matthews in certain emergencies. It is not to be understood, however, that the writer awards to him the possession of any extraordinary gifts of cunning or of wit. There are those, we are aware, who allow him credit for no one moral or intellectual quality—who consider him a perfect and unimprovable specimen of ignorance and stupidity; while on the other hand, persons are not wanting who look upon him as a man by no means devoid of sense, and withal very adroit. The truth, probably, as in most cases of conflicting opinions, lies between the extremes. The writer does not believe him to be altogether the blockhead which some suppose, but is, on the contrary, inclined to award him some degree of shrewdness, with more

of native intellect than he has received credit for. But in order to the better illustration of his character, a few personal anecdotes have been collected from authentic sources, which will be submitted in the present chapter, together with two or three reports of interviews with him, which have been politely furnished the writer by literary gentlemen of character.

While confined in the Bellevue prison in October last, awaiting his examination, prior to his full commitment for trial, the inmates of the prison, suspecting that he had money in his possession, made an attempt to inflict the discipline of blanketing him. The prophet threatened them with eternal torment if they proceeded. They assured him he must submit, as it was an ordeal through which all of them had to pass, and he was no better than the rest of them. They then put him into a blanket, several of them holding the corners of it, and gave him two or three tosses. The poor prophet, finding that they were determined to carry their threat into further operation, agreed to pay them twenty-five cents a-piece to let him off. After they had liberated him, he declared, most truly, beyond a doubt, that he had been thrown into a "den of thieves." The allusion was more to the point than was always the case in his references to sacred writ.

While Matthews was residing at the hotel near the Battery as heretofore mentioned, a gentleman by the name of F—— had also his quarters at the same place. Not many days after he had commenced boarding there, he was one morning very familiarly and abruptly accosted by Matthews, with

whom he had not previously exchanged a syllable. "Mr. F——," said he, "how long do you think I have been upon this earth?" "Indeed, I have no idea, sir," was the reply. "Well, I will tell you," rejoined the prophet; "more than eighteen hundred years!" Mr. F——, knowing nothing as to the peculiarity of his character at the time, it may be imagined, was somewhat surprised at so extraordinary an annunciation, and scanning him from top to toe, involuntarily exclaimed, "The d—l you have; do you tell me so?" "I do," observed the other. "Then all I have to say is, that you are a remarkably good-looking fellow for one of your age!" Matthews put on one of his sardonic grins, and with an indignant scowl, replied, "You are a devil, sir," and walked immediately away.

It will have been seen, as well from the narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Folger, as from other circumstances which have been noted, that Matthews did not pay that respectful deference to the female character which is exacted in all respectable society, and cheerfully awarded in all Christian countries. He seemed to look upon the sex as an inferior order of beings, like the Mohammedans, and spoke of them with sneers and contempt, like the Indians. A learned and accomplished theologian of New-York has furnished the following incident, which affords a pointed and appropriate illustration of this feature of his character, and is withal rather amusing. It occurred in the bookstore of Mr. F——, in Broadway, a few months before the prophet left the city.

"He entered the store, and abruptly launched out

into a kind of soliloquizing rhapsody on the present state of religion and the prospects of the church. Without appearing to notice him, I indulged my curiosity a few moments in listening to his wild and *outré* tirade against the whole existing order of things religious. Though in the main a medley of 'bald disjointed chat,' yet I was certainly somewhat struck with a kind of shrewd piquancy in his remarks, and a vein occasionally approaching to a rude eloquence, which I can conceive might have no inconsiderable effect upon an audience of no more cultivation or refinement than himself. I retain nothing of his rhodomontade but the amusing simile he employed in speaking of the agency of women in sustaining the benevolent operations of the present day. This, he said, was but acting over the part of the Philistines in sending back the ark of the covenant to the land of Israel in a cart drawn by cows instead of oxen. 'So it is now,' said he; 'the ark of the Lord is held up and carried by nothing but *cows*.'"

When likely to be pressed into a corner, Matthews was frequently dexterous in escaping by evasion, as in the following instance, which has been related to the writer by a gentleman who dined with the prophet several times, at the house of one of his disciples. The gentleman at the first interview, having no previous knowledge of him, supposed him, from his costume and appearance, to be a Jewish Rabbi, and, of course, well acquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures; he took the liberty respectfully to ask him the literal signification of a certain Hebrew expression. Upon this, Matthias hesitated a

short time, and then very shrewdly replied, "that he was asked so many questions, and they took up so much of his time to satisfy, that he had come to the resolution to give no answers to any of them." His proselyte, who was present, appeared to be well satisfied with this reply, presuming, no doubt, that the prophet knew all things, and could, if he chose, give the true explanation required.

In proof of the gift, or power which he asserted, of working miracles, Matthews related the following incident to the same gentleman while at table. Whether the prophet himself did not intend the anecdote to be rather a specimen of pleasantry, it is difficult to say. He stated, that while imprisoned, in the early part of his career, at Albany, there was also in confinement a crazy woman, who gave great annoyance to the inmates, not unfrequently committing assaults upon them. He met her one day as he was descending the stairs of the upper apartments, apparently in a furious rage; and having the Bible in his hand, he brought it in contact with her face with considerable force, exclaiming, at the same time, in a high tone of voice, *In the name of God depart from her!* which had the desired effect. She immediately became calm, and in a short time was dismissed from the prison as cured. He soon afterward met her in the street, apparently well.

The subjoined account of an interview with the impostor, and his assumption of miraculous gifts, has been furnished by a literary friend. It also

illustrates the facility, already referred to, with which he was wont to escape an approaching dilemma:—

"I met Matthews accidentally, one afternoon, at the warehouse of the Messrs. ——, which he had lately taken it into his head to visit several times. On my entrance he was sitting upon a box, arrayed in his green frock-coat and red sash, holding forth to one of the partners and two or three other gentlemen standing around him, on the subject of his pretended divinity. The immediate topic was his alleged power of working miracles, which he was maintaining against the skeptical remarks and queries of his auditory, who were evidently amusing themselves with his absurdities. He was ready in answering, and displayed considerable shrewdness in meeting the difficulties presented to him—which, however, were not of a very startling character, as the comments of the gentlemen were rather of an ironical turn, than involving any thing like serious disputation. Matthews himself was a very pattern of gravity—courteous, but never relaxing into a smile, and continually smoothing down his luxuriant beard and moustaches, an exercise in which he seemed to take great delight.

"I listened for a time without joining in the conversation, but finally made a remark which Matthews answered very readily, and for some minutes the discourse was kept up exclusively between him and myself. The subject was still his alleged miraculous power. I urged him to afford us a proof of it by working some miracle on the spot; but he, of course, evaded the demand, very much in

the usual style of impostors, sometimes by declaring that it would be an indignity to exert a supernatural and heavenly power for the mere indulgence of an idle curiosity, and then again insisting upon the necessity of our having faith in him, before a miracle could be made perceptible to our senses. After some discourse of this kind, I grew tired of his nonsense, and went away to another part of the warerroom, where I entered into conversation with some other gentlemen.

"In the course of fifteen or twenty minutes, I returned to where Matthews was yet sitting, and found him still 'harping on my daughter,' that is to say, the miracles. Mr. ——, one of the firm, was telling him, when I came up, that he was suffering much from the aching of a decayed tooth, and urging him, with mock gravity, to make that tooth instantly sound by his divine power; Matthews somewhat testily replied that he could not work this miracle unless Mr. —— had faith that he could do so, and seemed rather anxious to change the subject. To effect this, as I supposed, he began to tell a long story about the child of Mr. Folger, which had been taken very dangerously ill: that a physician was called in by the parents: that he (M.) came to the house and found the physician there: that he rebuked Mr. and Mrs. Folger for seeking human aid, and required them to dismiss the doctor: that they refused and he insisted: that he told them unless they did the child would die: that they yielded at last, sent the doctor away, and he commanded the child to arise and be well, which was instantly done.

The child got up from the bed in perfect health, and had so continued ever since.

"We, of course, all expressed the requisite amount of astonishment at this history; and, at the first pause in the conversation, I asked, 'How old was the child?' 'Quite an infant,' he answered—'about a year old.' 'Old enough to talk, or to understand what was said to it?' 'No!' 'You stated a little while ago, I think, that you could not work a miracle in behalf of Mr. ——, unless *he* had faith in you—did you not?' Matthews looked hard at me for a few moments, with a cool wary glance, apparently revolving in his mind the purport of my query, and then turning suddenly away, answered, 'I was not talking with you—you are an interloper—you interrupt my conversation with this gentleman;' and further speech he vouchsafed me not. I presume he had discovered the dilemma into which I was leading him, between his avowed necessity of faith existing in the party on whom a miracle was to be wrought, and the impossibility that such faith could exist in the infant."

The extraordinary community at Mount Zion were frequent travellers to and from New-York, both by land and water. When on board of a steamboat, in which he was often a passenger, he was always liable, from the strangeness of his costume and conduct, and from his ridiculous pretensions, to the jeers and reproaches, and sometimes to the harassing treatment of his fellow passengers. He had no discretion; and it was an easy matter to arouse his passions to the highest degree of exasperation—

at which times his miraculous and divine powers contributed not a little to the amusement of the bystanders. On one of these occasions, Matthews having boasted of these exalted attainments, an athletic farmer proposed to test the extent of his powers by casting him overboard, that he might remove the skepticism of the incredulous multitude by walking on the water. The prophet did not relish the proposition, which was prevented by the interference of the captain. At another time, the same hardy yeoman attempted to shave off his beard while on board of the boat, and was only induced to desist by the supplications of one of his female followers, and the renewed interposition of the captain. This disposition to annoy him occasions no surprise, when the reports in circulation as to his conduct at Mount Zion and elsewhere are considered, and when the repulsive and insulting language in which he was in the habit of indulging towards all who questioned or denied his impious pretensions is also taken into the account. "Liars," "Devils," "Gentiles," "Children of the Gentiles," &c., with other epithets equally mild and conciliatory, were as household words with him on such occasions.

A distinguished literary gentleman has furnished the writer with the following detailed account of an interview with Matthews, during one of these steamboat excursions of which we have just been speaking. It forms an interesting little narrative of itself; and the reflections subjoined by the writer are entitled to grave consideration,—although the author is constrained to withhold his assent from the conclu-

sion to which his friend has arrived, in its full extent. The author fully believes there is such a thing as fanaticism which is stone-blind, and of deep and lamentable delusion, in which there is great sincerity, without impiety.

"Some time in the course of the last summer, passing up the Hudson in one of the steamboats, I happened to be sitting at one end of a sofa, on the upper deck, at the other end of which sat a person who excited no attention at the moment. On pulling out my watch, however, he inquired of me the hour, and this naturally drawing my notice, I remarked something rather particular in his dress and appearance. The former consisted of a green frock-coat lined with plaid silk, pantaloons of the same cloth and colour, a white vest, all quite new and remarkably clean and neat. He wore a long beard almost white; his face was pale and rather haggard, and his eye of a dull gray. His countenance was altogether somewhat remarkable, but its expression neither agreeable nor intelligent.

"On telling him the hour, he pulled out a splendid gold watch and appendages, and observed that our watches differed as to time. This led to further conversation, which I was willing to encourage, from some little curiosity occasioned by his dress, his long beard, and his singular manner. He soon gave me to understand that he was the Spirit of Truth, which, it seems, has either disappeared, or lain dormant in the world, since the first ages of Christianity. The time for reviving it had now come, and in him I beheld its visible representative. I questioned this

important personage concerning the details of his system, but found him utterly incapable of explaining it consistently, rationally, or in a manner at all within my comprehension. I occasionally assisted him out of some of his difficulties, by explaining his own meaning; and though the explanations were designedly inconsistent and contradictory, he always assented to them eagerly, as if glad to be relieved from his labyrinth of obscurity and darkness. It is impossible for me to give any intelligible analysis of what was in itself unintelligible, and therefore I shall decline the attempt.

"His style of conversation was that of a very ignorant and very dull man; his voice was dry, sharp, and disagreeable, and there was so little of that enthusiasm which is the parent of genuine fanaticism, and the secret of its catching influence, in his language and manner, that I set him down in my own mind as a rank and wilful hypocrite and deceiver. Yet how it was possible such an ignorant, stupid being could deceive any rational person into the monstrous absurdity of believing that the Spirit of Truth, spoke in language not to be understood, I could not have conceived, had there not been so many examples of that wilful willingness with which mankind in every age have submitted to become the dupes and instruments of blundering imposture.

"While under pretence of explaining his system of faith he was gradually involving himself in new absurdities, and inconsistencies, we were rather rudely, as I then thought, broken in upon by a little sanguine looking man, with an ardent complexion, and

sturdy form, who attacked the Spirit of Truth with great vehemence and very little ceremony. I was somewhat nettled at this intrusion, and abuse of my companion, whom I desired to give me a specimen of his miraculous powers by taking away the speech of this irreverent intruder, and thus establishing the truth of his mission. He did not seem to relish this test of his divinity, and in the mean time the little man continued to rail at him with astonishing volubility. In the course of his argument he charged the prophet with a tissue of deceptions and crimes, that alarmed me at the company I had thus accidentally got into, and when, at length, I heard the name of Matthias, as that of my worshipful companion, I gave up his defence, and left him to the judgment of the crowd that had now gathered together.

"A sort of popular tribunal was formed around Matthias, and his accuser proceeded to a detail of crimes and deceptions of the most revolting character, such as have since been established against him in a court of justice. No violence was offered or threatened by the surrounding audience, yet did this wretched and guilty impostor, who affects to be no less than the maker of heaven and earth, and all the creatures which inhabit the universe, stand silent, and trembling under the consciousness of his crimes, in the presence of the very beings he pretended to have created. I never saw in the countenance and manner of any criminal more clear unerring marks of conscious guilt than this man exhibited on this occasion. I could not help ming-

ling pity for his present situation with abhorrence of his past enormities. He was now at the close of his career, on his way to Albany, where he was arrested on a charge of murder, and brought down to Westchester for trial.

"The extraordinary impositions, connected with the deplorable ignorance of Matthias, and the total absence of every qualification of person, manner, speech, and reasoning, which I had always believed necessary to constitute a successful impostor, created in my mind various reflections on the nature of what is denominated fanaticism, but which I believe is quite as often, if not oftener, sheer downright hypocrisy, both in the deceiver and in those who pretend to be deluded. It appeared to me utterly impossible that any rational beings, however ignorant or inexperienced, could, in an age of Christianity, be persuaded into the self-evident impossibility of a man, like themselves in every moral and physical attribute, being the Divinity itself, without the intervention of palpable, incontestable miracles performed by that person in open day, and in the presence of living witnesses.

"I could not therefore avoid the conclusion, that by far the greater portion of those who profess to be deluded, only assume the character of believers in these impostures, for the purpose of thus freeing themselves from the restraint of those rules and decorums and obligations of society, which they cannot otherwise contravene without calling down on their own heads disgrace and punishment. It will, in almost every case of these fanatical eruptions, be

seen that the imposture begins by railing against all the domestic duties and relations of the social state: filial and parental ties, the marriage vow, the sanctity of chastity, most especially, form the subjects of their attacks, and the basis of every false religion is almost uniformly laid in the ruins of feminine purity, matrimonial faith, and domestic obligations.

"That those who have become impatient of these ties and duties, or who wish to free themselves from the necessity of conforming to the restraints of the social state, and travel out into the boundless ocean of licentious indulgence, should shelter themselves under the convenient mask of fanaticism, from the imputation of criminal excesses, and affect to become conscientiously lewd, or wicked from principle, is surely not a subject of wonder, however it may be of regret. Hence we almost always see the development and exposure of these impostures exhibiting to the eyes of the world a scene of lewdness and licentious intercourse equally degrading to the character of that sex, among whom we almost always find the first disciples of every new-fangled religious imposition, and to the character of rational and moral beings. From all I have seen and read of these victims, or accomplices of successful imposture, I am unalterably convinced, that what is called fanaticism, is oftener the cool calculating offspring of a corrupt and sensual heart, than of a deluded overheated brain. Nine times in ten, I believe it is only the veil behind which corrupt men and women seek a shelter from the ignominy of a licen-

tious life, and cloak the indulgence of indiscriminate lewdness."

In the introduction to this interesting communication, the author dissented in part from the theory of the writer as to the extent to which he would carry it. But that his conclusions are just to a very considerable extent, cannot be denied. Indeed, an examination of the history of heresies and impostures, in all ages, will disclose the painful fact, that whether arising from enthusiasm, or phrensy, or from deliberate imposture, a common character seems to have run through and pervaded nearly all,—and the tendency has, beyond doubt, most usually been to licentiousness and criminal intercourse between the sexes. This fact has not escaped the enemies of Christianity, who have availed themselves of it in their attacks, for the purpose of increasing the weight of odium with which they would cover it. Mr. Hume, however, has the candour to assign the true cause for the effect, viz. the strength of human passions, and the facilities of criminal indulgence, afforded by the frequent and intimate associations produced by congenial fanaticism, between the sexes. The delusion of the followers of Ann Lee, however, commonly known as the Shakers, has differently affected their moral practice, since their creed requires a mortification of the sensual portion of our nature, for the greater perfection of the soul. Still, in most cases, from the primitive heresy of Gnosticism, down to the fifth monarchy sect of the puritan age, and even to the days of Joanna Southcote in England, and the Cochranites, the lascivious Mor-

mons, and the sensual Perfectionists of the present day in the United States, the tendency, it cannot be denied, has been to permit almost every licence of impurity.

To resume, however, the illustrations we had proposed of the intellectual character of Matthews. Notwithstanding his occasional appearance of stolidity, there is often about him a smartness of repartee, and a readiness and adroitness in converting casual incidents to his own advantage, which gives him an undue consequence with the unthinking multitude, who look upon him rather as a rare monster than a fool. Mr. Folger has said, in his narrative, that he is an arrant coward; in support of which opinion, it may be observed, that in the whole course of his career, whenever he had reason to apprehend that his insolence would be visited with punishment, he was very cautious to withhold it—though exceedingly lavish of abuse at other times. Being told by one who would not brook his arrogance, that if he spoke to him as he had done to others, he would knock him down—"I will have nothing to say to you," was his ready and prudent reply. His shrewdness has been frequently manifested in his retorts upon those who have questioned him in regard to his manner of life, &c. "I once heard him," says a friend, addressing the writer, "a few moments on board of a steamboat in conversation assert, that '*He kept a long fast when he first began to preach the truth in Albany;*' and when asked why he did not live with and provide for his children as honest men did, he instantly answered the in-

quirer, whom he had constantly been calling a devil, '*My children obey my voice, and follow me.*' The inquirer replied, 'I endeavour to control my children the best way I can, and yet they do not always obey me.' Matthews instantly retorted, '*The disobedient are the children of the devil,*' and then laughed with real glee at the point of his own repartee. After enjoying his witticism to the full, he said, in extenuation of his risibility, that 'Elijah was a jovial old soul!'"

Again, after his arrest, on his way to Bedford Court, he, with other passengers, walked up some of the hills, and, in so doing, the prophet rather encroached upon and crowded one of them into the gutter; and when the latter remonstrated, the former replied, "I always *incline to the right.*"

After arriving at the village, and while proceeding from the tavern to the Court-house, followed of course by a cavalcade of boys and idlers, he gravely turned about and exclaimed, "Why, I have a *few followers yet!*"

As to the extent of the reading of Matthews, independently of the Bible, with which he is greatly conversant, the writer has no means of judging. From his general manifestations of ignorance, however, it is most probably very limited. He may have read the lives and exploits of former heresiarchs and impostors, and attempted to copy their unblessed and inglorious example, in respect both to conduct and doctrine. But such is probably not the fact, although striking parallels might very easily be traced between his character and pretensions and those of

other deceivers in almost every prominent instance of fanaticism and delusion. Even in Simon Magus, conspicuous among the first corrupters of Christianity, the same leading characteristics, in principles, pretensions, and practice, were displayed as in Robert Matthews. After the rejection of the sorcerer by the Apostle Peter, for his impious offer of money in purchase of the gift of the Holy Spirit, he fell into greater errors and abominations than before. Travelling to Rome, and exciting the admiration of many by his false miracles and impostures, he was honoured as a deity by Claudius, who is said by some to have decreed a statue to him with the inscription "*Simoni Deo sancto*"—although the fact has been disputed by able critics. He was called by his followers, "The Great Power of God;" and these blasphemous expressions have been quoted from one of his books by Jerome:—"I am the word of God—I am the beauty of God—I am the Comforter—I am the Almighty—I am the whole essence of God." His mistress, Helen, with whom he was guilty of all impiety, he called—"The first intelligence, the mother of all things, and sometimes the Holy Ghost. He said that by this first intelligence he had originally a design of creating the angels; but that she, knowing this will of her father, had descended lower, and had produced the angels and the other spiritual powers, to whom she had given no knowledge of her father; that these angels and powers had afterward made angels and men; that Helen had passed successively into the bodies of various women, among others, into that

of Helen, wife of Menelaus, who occasioned the war of Troy; and at last into the body of this Helen," a prostitute whom he had purchased at Tyre. He did not acknowledge Jesus Christ, but pretended to consider him his rival, asserting that he was himself the Christ. He taught a disbelief in the resurrection of the body, but only of the soul—the body being a substance too gross for an eternal destiny. He maintained that men need not trouble themselves about good works, and that the distinction of actions into good and evil was only introduced by angels to render men subject to them. He ascribed to them the Old Testament, which he rejected; and yet offered idolatrous worship to the angels, whom he considered spirits of evil, to propitiate them.* On the whole, the blasphemous pretensions and absurdities of Simon correspond remarkably with the ravings of Matthews.

Very similar to his conduct and pretensions, also, was the character of Montanus, the vain and superstitious enthusiast who founded the sect of the Montanists, in the second century of the Christian era. He commenced his career in Asia Minor, professing to be the Paraclete, or Comforter, the same who had descended upon the apostles, and whose return on earth before the second coming of Christ, for the purpose of completing the Divine Revelation, was expected by many of the faithful; and his trances, and ecstatic raptures, and frantic ravings, were probably regarded by the credulous

* Calmet, Robinson, Waddington.

and wondering multitude as the surest signs of Divine Revelation. He had many followers for a time, and his success was promoted by two prophetesses, who confirmed his mission and shared his spirit. They inculcated a severe morality, however, enjoining rigid fastings and celibacy.*

But one of the most remarkable of these parallels to the case of Matthews, for the closeness of resemblance in many striking features, is that of the Anabaptists of Munster in Germany, which excited the wonder of Europe during the early part of the seventeenth century, and of which such strange accounts are to be found in the histories of that epoch. The similarity between the principal of this sect, known as John of Leyden, and Matthews, not only in doctrine, but in worldly observance, and especially in the passion for magnificence of apparel and luxurious living, and in the rites and ceremonies exacted by each, is so remarkable as almost to lead to the conclusion, although heretofore repudiated, that the more recent impostor had formed himself and his creed, designedly, upon the model of his ancient prototype. The number of deluded proselytes who blindly followed the dictates of the Anabaptist leader was at one time so great, and their power so formidable, that several princes of Germany united against them; and it was not until after a vigorous siege, and an obstinate resistance, that the city of Munster, of which the fanatics had obtained com-

* Waddington's Church History.

plete possession, was taken, and their power broken down.

We feel confident that the curiosity of the reader will be gratified by a brief description of John of Leyden and his practices. He was originally a tailor, and, though not the founder of the sect, obtained a more absolute mastery over the minds of his deluded followers than any former false prophet. Instigated, no doubt, by the readiness of their submission to his assumed authority in all things, he declared that he had a commission from Heaven to be king of Israel and of righteousness, and to reign after the manner of King David. Accordingly, he appointed his chancellor, marshal, chamberlain, and other royal officers; maintained a most luxurious table, at which, like the kings of France, he ate in public, and was served in royal state, his attendants kneeling when they presented to him dish or goblet; and from his eight wives selected one to be his queen, whose separate establishment was on the same scale of splendour with his own. The king and queen, with all their officers and courtiers, were attired in the most costly dresses—rich silks, furs, brocades, and jewels—purchased with the plunder of the churches and the clergy. The king's public habit was a suit of silver tissue, lined with crimson silk, and fastened with golden buckles. At his right hand a page walked or rode, bearing an open Bible; and on the left, another with a magnificent sword. On his head the king wore a triple crown of gold, richly adorned with gems; and round his neck he wore, suspended by a golden chain, a singular orna-

ment of gold, representing the terrestrial globe, with a cross and two swords, one of gold and the other of silver, with the inscription, "King of Righteousness over the whole world." His audiences were held upon a vast platform erected in the market-place; on this he appeared seated on a splendid throne, with his counsellors standing below him, and all who had any suit to make to him knelt three times, and then prostrated themselves before him as they presented their petitions.

Besides the title of king, John of Leyden also assumed that of "The Father," and the first pledge exacted from all who enrolled themselves among his followers was, implicitly to do his will, and, if necessary, to suffer death at his command, or in his defence or service. He enjoined and enforced a community of goods, or rather (as has since been done by Matthews) a surrender of all possessions, land, money, arms, and merchandise to him, as the Father and Lord of all, to be employed by him in the universal establishment of his kingdom—and denounced the vengeance of Heaven and eternal damnation on all such as refused to believe in him and do his will. He declared, as also did his followers, that, until he came, righteousness had not been preached upon the earth since the Saviour; and he equally denounced the Pope and Luther the Reformer as teachers of unrighteousness. All churches and convents he commanded to be destroyed in the market-places of Baal; priests and monks he denounced as children of darkness, and all sovereigns he would put to death. He pro-

claimed the wickedness and nullity of all marriages, except those solemnized by himself or his prophets, but enjoined polygamy, himself setting the example. Each of his principal followers had from six to eight wives, and both men and women were compelled to marry. Infidelity, or ill-treatment, on the part of the husband was punished with death. He taught that no man could understand the Scriptures but himself, or those whom he enlightened with his spirit, and all the prophecies in the Old Testament, relating to the Saviour, he applied to himself, and proclaimed their fulfilment in the establishment of his kingdom.

In our own country, the most surprising instance of imposture and delusion, perhaps, that has occurred, was that of the Cochranites, whose enormities in licentiousness made so much stir in Maine and New-Hampshire a few years since. Cochrane was an officer in the army, thrown out of commission by the reduction of the military establishment of the United States, after the conclusion of the last war with England. Having become poor and penniless, he left one of the New-England cities—Portland, if we mistake not—and struck off into the country, seeking his fortune, and caring not whither he went. One day, as night drew on, he found himself near a farm-house, weary and hungry, and without a penny to purchase a mouthful of food, or the use of a pillow for the night. The thought struck him suddenly of throwing himself upon the hospitality of the farmer, for the occasion, in the character of a minister. Introducing himself as such to the family, he was gladly received; and as the coun-

try was new, and destitute of clergymen, the good people forthwith despatched messengers to the neighbours, that a minister had come among them, and invited them in to attend a meeting. The impostor had not anticipated so speedy a trial of his clerical character; but having assumed it, there was no escape—he must act the part for the time being in the best way he could. Being neither ignorant nor destitute of talents, he succeeded in acquitting himself much better than he had anticipated, and gave so much satisfaction to his audience—not very discriminating, as may well be supposed—as to induce him to persevere in the imposture he had commenced. As he acquired skill and confidence by practice in his new vocation, his popularity increased, and he soon found it a profitable occupation. He was followed by multitudes; and it was not long before he announced himself as some great one, and founded a new sect of religionists. His command over the audiences which he addressed is said to have been wonderful, and his influence over his followers unbounded. It seemed as though he possessed some potent spell, by means of which he was enabled to hold the victims of his impostures in a state of enchantment. A clerical friend (a professor in an eastern college) has informed the writer, that having heard of the wonderful sway which Cochrane held over his disciples, and indeed of the impressions he made upon casual hearers, he determined one evening to go and witness his performances himself. While present, although a very cool and grave personage, he assures us that he felt some

strange, undefinable, mysterious influence creeping over him to such a degree, that he was obliged actually to tear himself away in apprehension of the consequences. This gentleman, however, is a believer in animal magnetism, and is inclined to attribute the power of Cochrane to that cause. It was said that if the impostor did but touch the hand or neck of a female, his power over her person and reason was complete. The consequence, therefore, was the most open and loathsome sensuality. So atrocious was his conduct, that he seduced great numbers of females, married and unmarried, under the pretext of raising up a holy race of men. The peace of many families was broken up, and the villain kept an establishment like a seraglio. His career, however, was happily short. But enough of these disgusting and melancholy commentaries upon the weakness of human nature, and we return to the principal subject of our history.

It may, probably, be expected of the writer, that he should make an avowal of his opinion as to the soundness or unsoundness of the mind of Matthews, although, from the illustrations that have been given of his character, habits, conduct, and the strange jumble of things inexplicable, taught as his doctrines, every reader might be supposed capable of forming an opinion for himself. As it respects Mr. Pierson, there cannot well be two opinions. He was seized with monomania as early as 1828, and the malady increased upon him until the death of his wife, which event was a severe shock to his reason. His association with Matthews completed the ruin of his

mind, although upon all business matters, as far as they could be disconnected from the supposed direct influences and instructions of the Holy Spirit, his intellectual powers and faculties were as active and acute as ever. His legal adviser informs the writer, that within a very few days of his death, he came to the city to attend to a case before an examiner in chancery, and, during its progress, was as shrewd and intelligent, so far as regarded the matter in hand, as in his best days. But we learn from the ablest physiologists—and, indeed, the fact is within the personal knowledge of all who have had opportunities of studying the operations of the "mind diseased"—that "among the most singular phenomena connected with insanity, we must reckon those cases in which the hallucination is confined to a single point, while on every other subject the patient speaks and acts like a rational man; and he often shows the most astonishing power of avoiding the subject of his disordered impression, when circumstances make it desirable for him to do so."* The books abound with cases in close coincidence with that of Mr. Pierson, where persons, otherwise in a healthy state of mind, from peculiar circumstances became impressed with a belief in visions and revelations, and of holding intercourse with spiritual beings. "The particular character of these, perhaps, arises out of some previous processes of the mind, or strong propensity of character; and the notion of a supernatural revelation may proceed

* Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers.

from a certain feeling of the new and peculiar manner in which the impression is fixed upon the mind."* Such, beyond all question, was the case of Mr. Pierson.

The case of Matthews has been rendered more difficult of solution by the decision of the court and jury at Westchester. It is indeed possible that that decision was correct; but the writer is free to declare, that, after a careful investigation of his character, and the history of his proceedings, he has arrived at a different conclusion in part. His shrewdness and cunning, and the point and felicity of his occasional repartees, have been supposed to make in favour of the soundness of his faculties. But the cunning and adroitness of the partially insane are proverbial. Examples in point have often been observed by the writer, in his occasional visits to the insane hospital at Bloomingdale—embracing imposture, and brilliant sallies of wit, biting satire, and pungent repartee. It is true that Matthews has always been discharged when arraigned upon the charge of insanity. But such instances are not of very rare occurrence. Lord Erskine gives a very remarkable history of a man who indicted Dr. Munro for confining him without a cause in a madhouse. He underwent the most rigid examination by the counsel for the defendant without discovering any appearance of insanity, until a gentleman came into court who desired a question to be put to him, respecting a princess with whom he had corresponded

* Abercrombie.

in cherry juice. He immediately talked about the princess in the most insane manner, and the cause was at an end. But this having taken place in Westminster, he commenced another action in the city of London, and on this occasion no effort could induce him to expose his insanity; so that the cause was dismissed only by bringing against him the evidence taken at Westminster. On another occasion Lord Erskine examined a gentleman who had indicted his brother for confining him as a maniac, and the examination had gone on for a great part of the day without discovering any trace of insanity: Dr. Sims then came into court and informed the counsel that the gentleman considered himself as the Saviour of the world. A single observation addressed to him in this character showed his insanity, and put an end to the cause. Many similar cases might be cited.* There is also a curious case on record, where an insane person, on his way in charge of a professional gentleman to an insane asylum, managed to counterfeit the sane gentleman, and caused him to be taken into the hospital and secured instead of himself. And there are various reasons which compel us to believe the fact in regard to Matthews to be,—that he is labouring under monomania, partly hereditary and partly superinduced by religious fanaticism and phrensy. This theory is supported by the circumstances and the manner in which the disease came upon him. His system, also, if that may be called system which has

* Abercrombie.

no such quality appertaining to it, betrays an unsound intellect. It is incredible that any man, feigning himself mad, or in his sober senses, in devising a scheme of imposture could form such a system of utterly preposterous and unintelligible absurdities. It is true that he always had reason enough at his command to keep quiet when in danger, and he desisted from his phrensied vociferations in court immediately on perceiving that they would not aid his cause. But the insane are proverbially cowards; and the perfect docility which marked his demeanour in an instant, and when raving with passion, in obedience to the landlord of the hotel at the Battery, is a strong evidence of derangement. Had he been actuated by a prudent forecast, moreover, with the unbounded influence he possessed over Pierson and Folger, he might have enriched himself from their estates before their property disappeared. This he did not do, but merely contented himself with extravagant dress and living, without apparently taking thought for the morrow. But in addition to these, and other evidences of hallucination that might be adduced, insanity is with him a family affliction. One of his brothers, as has already been stated, died insane; another, the writer has been assured, is now insane; and every member of the family is said at one time or another to have given indications of a disordered mind. This family infirmity is a very strong proof of a disordered intellect in the case of the prophet. The propensities of his intellectual character, which had been kept under restraint by reason, or by external circumstances, or old habits which had been

subdued or restrained, developed themselves without control under the temperance and religious excitements in which he took part, and led his mind into the fancies arising out of them. Visions of a somewhat distempered imagination, in which he might formerly have indulged, of that kind usually called day-dreams, or castle building, then perhaps recurring to his mind, he may in the first moments of his delirium have believed in their real existence.* Still, he has not been without "method in his madness;" and it seems clear to the writer, that, with a tinge of insanity, he is also much of a knave, and probably a dupe likewise in part to his own imposture.

* Abercrombie.

CHAPTER XI.

Concluding Observations—Religion not responsible for Monomania and Delusion—Hallucinations arising from other Causes—Catalepsy—The Power of Sympathy—Animal Magnetism—Various other Phenomena of the Mind—Catholic Delusions—Epidemic bodily Affections—Mewing and biting Nuns—Barclay's Apology for the Quakers—Religious Excesses in Kentucky—Fanaticism of the Present Day—Evil Consequences upon the Church—Connected with the Impostures of Matthias—Fanaticism and Delusion still existing in New-York—Ill Effects of the Ultraism of the Day—Project for dispensing with Wine at the Eucharist—Conclusion.

It was the principal and almost the sole design of the present work to make it a simple record of facts—leaving theories and speculations to the philosophers. And yet, in the view of the writer, it would be a course of questionable propriety to send forth a volume of this description without addressing a few words of caution, especially to the youthful reader, that he is by no means to take it for granted that the gross impieties and strong delusions we have been contemplating are to be charged to the account of the Christian religion. The disorder of the mind usually termed monomania by the physicians—being that form of mental hallucination in which the mind is absorbed by a single idea—arises from various moral causes, and frequently has no connection whatever with religious subjects. De-

lusions also, deep, dark, and often fatal, are as likely to settle upon the mind, and cloud the understanding, in regard to other matters, as upon those of religion. The causes, the direction, and the results, are as various as the structure of the mind, and the pursuits of men.

The delusion in the early history of New-England, on the subject of witchcraft, which prevailed so extensively, and which, in the blindness of its phrensy, doomed so many innocent victims to the scaffold and the fagot, was partly religious and partly not, and withal thoroughly fanatical. It has been attributed, and that not without a show of reason, to the superstitious era in which those excesses occurred. But if so, what are we to say of that strong mental delusion—and none was ever more unaccountable or more melancholy—which, in the present enlightened age, and in a section of country inhabited by the most intelligent people in this union, compassed the abduction and murder of a few citizens, in revenge for an imaginary offence—not against the peace and dignity of the state, nor to the personal detriment of a single individual, but merely for the anticipated infringement of a regulation of a private social society! Most assuredly, the mental malady which instigated and perpetrated such a crime, and which was shared to a greater or less extent by hundreds of respectable and intelligent men, had no connection with the religious principle. Nor was the fanatical delusion of antimasonry, which succeeded it, and swept like a hurricane of fire over

large portions of our country, allied to that principle.

The mania which prevailed among the capitalists of England and France, in the memorable instance of the South Sea Bubble, affords another example of delusion equally strong, and yet upon a subject still farther removed from things appertaining to religion. How many thousands of men, heedless and blind, on that occasion rushed into the gulf of bankruptcy, as if bereft of reason, impelled by the desire of at once realizing fortunes by means they knew not what, and from sources they knew not whence! Nor was this mental obliquity peculiar to that isolated instance of stupendous stock-jobbing. It was more strongly developed on that occasion, because of the magnitude of the scheme, and the number and consequence of its dupes. But the like spirit is yet abroad, and ever will be, whenever new sources and objects of speculation are presented to an enterprising community.

Still more remarkable, however, and yet more absurd than any or all these, was the delusion which spread over Europe some half a century ago; and which has at various times been revived, and is by no means extinct at the present time, on the subject of animal magnetism. There is no greater absurdity extant in popular opinion, than the fancied analogy between the action of the mineral magnet and that of the animal energy, maintained by the disciples of Anthony Mesmer, the German impostor, who turned the heads of half the *savans* of Europe upon this subject. No more audacious or successful

mountebank, probably, ever lived than Mesmer. But although compelled to quit Vienna in consequence of being detected in a fraudulent miracle he had attempted, yet his career in Paris afterward was one of unexampled success. The magnet soon grew into comparative disuse, and the impostor declared that the pretended cures wrought by him were effected by a mysterious power in his own person, and that this power was allied not only to the magnetic power, but to the attraction dispersed throughout the universe. Monstrous as were his pretensions, he obtained credence, and for a while all Europe, including princes, and learned doctors, scholars, and philosophers, were among his believers. There were no more splendid *salons* in Paris than his, and none more universally and fashionably thronged.

It will not be pretended, we apprehend, that a delusion like this, had any connection with the religious principle—and analogous examples might be multiplied to an almost indefinite extent, were more necessary to establish the position we are maintaining. But it is believed the few cases to which brief reference has been made, will be amply sufficient for the present purpose.

Perhaps, however, it may yet be objected by the skeptic, that the examples cited are exceptions, standing alone, at the distance of long intervals of years, and that, after all, monomania has been both more strikingly and more frequently exhibited in

* Vide Appendix, H.

connection with religion, than upon any other subject. The answer is nevertheless at hand. Monomania, and indeed every form of insanity, depends for its existence, in any individual case, upon physical causes. Certain persons possess from birth, hereditarily, or otherwise, a physical organization which predisposes them to paroxysms of insanity on the occurrence of any considerable excitement, whether mental or physical. In such instances, it is no more an argument against religion, that it does not protect its votaries from such calamities, or counteract such predispositions, than to object that it does not cure the gout, or prevent the consumption. The disorder is, moreover, certain to fasten upon the strongest principle of our nature; and it is the religious principle, beyond all doubt, which is at once the strongest and the most universally felt, and to which the appeal is the most easily made.

The doctrine of supernatural and Divine influence acting upon the body as well as the mind, is as old as the history of man. The religious history of the Greeks and Romans, of Britain under the priesthood of the Druids, of India, and, in general, of all savage tribes, is full of its fruits. The convulsions of the Pythian priestess,—the contortions of the Sibyl—the vast variety of convulsive and cataleptic phenomena among the devotees in India, and also among the spinning dervishes of the Mohammedans, may be adduced as illustrations. But as the Christian religion makes the deepest and strongest impressions upon the mind and feelings,

it, of course, furnishes one of the most effectual of those conditions under which the principles of sympathy, imitation, nervous sensibility, and imagination are excited to the production of such phenomena.

Nothing, then, can be more natural than that the history of Christianity should abundantly illustrate this order of delusions, of which the principal facts comprised in the foregoing pages form but another chapter—more strongly marked, however, in some of its developments, than the historian is often under the necessity of placing upon record. Nor are these delusions in any respect peculiar, as some are disposed to maintain, to Protestants, or those who, for the convenience of designation, are known as Evangelical Christians. "The influence of the Roman Catholic religion, especially in the middle ages, connected, as it then was, with the pomp of processions, with public exercises of penance, and with innumerable practices which strongly excited the imaginations of its votaries, certainly brought the mind to a very favourable state for the reception of a nervous disorder. Accordingly, so long as the doctrines of Christianity were blended with so much mysticism, unhallowed disorders prevailed to an important extent; and even in our days we find them propagated with the greatest facility where the existence of superstition produces the greatest effect in more limited districts, as it once did among whole nations."*

* Hecker's Epidemics of the Middle Ages.

The history of the enthusiasts of Cevennes, called Camisards,—of the Convulsionaries of St. Medad, and the work just referred to, are full of facts upon this subject—proving that monomania, fanaticism, and delusion are not only sympathetic, but epidemic diseases. "The imaginations of women," says Dr. Babbington, "are always more excitable than those of men, and they are therefore susceptible of every folly when they lead a life of strict seclusion, and their thoughts are constantly turned inward upon themselves. Hence in orphan asylums, hospitals, and convents, the nervous disorder of one female so easily and quickly becomes the disorder of all. I have read in a good medical work that a nun, in a very large convent in France, began to mew like a cat; shortly afterward other nuns also mewed together every day at a certain time, for several hours together. The whole surrounding Christian neighbourhood heard, with equal chagrin and astonishment, this daily cat-concert, which did not cease until all the nuns were informed that a company of soldiers were placed by the police before the entrance of the convent, and that they were provided with rods, and would continue whipping them until they promised not to mew any more. But of all the epidemics of females which I myself have seen in Germany, or of which the history is known to me, the most remarkable is the celebrated Convent-epidemic of the fifteenth century, which Cardan describes, and which peculiarly proves what I would here enforce. A certain nun in Germany fell to biting all her companions. In the course of a short

time all the nuns of this convent began biting each other. The news of this infatuation among the nuns soon spread, and it passed from convent to convent throughout a great part of Germany, principally Saxony and Brandenburg. It afterward visited the nunneries of Holland, and at last the nuns had the biting mania even as far as Rome."

The propagation of epileptic and other convulsions is well established. When an individual in a crowd is seized with these affections, the disorder very commonly spreads itself through the crowd. From the occurrence and rapid propagation of epilepsy among the crowded political assemblies (*comitia*) of the Romans, this affection was called the *morbus comitialis*; and in order to prevent its spread on such occasions, a law was passed to break up the *comitia*, and disperse the crowd on the first occurrence of a case.

A striking illustration of the effects of the principle of involuntary imitation and imagination upon persons brought together in a close assembly, even where nothing is spoken, occurs in Barclay's Apology for the Quakers. After speaking of the Divine influence as coming down upon them, and producing "a trembling, and a motion of the body upon most if not all," he proceeds to say: "and from this the name Quakers or Tremblers was first reproachfully cast upon us, which, if it be not of our own choosing, yet we are not ashamed of it, but have rather reason to rejoice in this respect, even that we are sensible of this power that hath sometimes laid hold on our adversaries, and made them

yield to us, and join with us, and confess to the truth, *before they had any doctrines, so that sometimes many at one meeting have been thus convinced: and power would sometimes also reach to, and wonderfully work, even in little children, to the astonishment and admiration of many!*"

About thirty or thirty-five years ago, there was an extensive revival of religion (so called) in Kentucky, characterized by the greatest fanaticism, accompanied by a great variety of bodily affections, and running into many painful excesses. These fanatics were reducible to various classes, some of which were affected by "the *falling* exercise;" and others by what was called the "*jerking* exercise;" others were moved by the Spirit to propose the "*running* exercise;" and others again the "*climbing* exercise"—all which exercises are sufficiently indicated by their names. It was a frequent occurrence for a number of the people to gather round a tree, some praying, and others imitating the barking of dogs, which operation was called, in familiar parlance among them, "treeing the devil." It was stated also concerning the same people, that in their religious assemblies, or other places of worship, religious professors of zeal and standing would get out into the broad aisle, and go down upon their knees together, playing marbles, and other childish games, under the notion of obeying that saying of the Saviour—"except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;" others would ride up and down the aisles of the church on sticks, &c. It was further said that the religious leaders,

or at least one of them, by the name of M'Namara, would affect to personate Satan: that on a certain occasion during Camp-meeting he was creeping about among the people's feet, exclaiming, "I am the old serpent that tempted Eve:" when approaching in this manner to a Scotchman who was on the ground as a spectator, the man lifted up his heel, and stamping on the face of the minister, replied, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This man, M'Namara, was regarded among them with superstitious reverence, insomuch that it was common for them to sing, in worship, a hymn, having for its chorus—"Glory to God and M'Namara." A pious friend of the writer, who was at the time a student of theology under the late Dr. Mason, states that these facts were reported by his fellow students from Kentucky, one of whom actually heard the blasphemous chorus sung! And yet all these affections, these "fantastic tricks," which might well "make angels weep," were fully believed to be the work of the Holy Spirit—the fruits and evidences of conversion,—and it would have been bold impiety and blasphemy to doubt it.

This brief sketch of the Kentucky enthusiasm brings us back to the point we had in view in the commencement of the volume, and of which, it is hoped, we have never lost sight, viz. the great danger of running into extremes, and making ourselves wise above what is written. What sober Christian does not shrink with pain, sorrow, and disgust from proceedings like those just related, carried on under the name of religion, and with an im-

pious confidence referred to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit! And yet they are scarcely more extravagant or revolting than have been witnessed in our own day, and in some of the most enlightened regions of our own state. Look at the present condition of the churches of western New-York, which have become, in truth, "a people scattered and peeled." The time has not come to write the ecclesiastical history of the last ten years. And yet somebody should chronicle the facts now, lest in after times the truth, however correctly it may be preserved by tradition, should not be believed. Twenty years hence, who, probably, would believe that early in the second quarter of the present century, Christian parents in the state of New-York could have been induced, by the teachings of fanaticism, to whip their children with rods into repentance? Who, twenty years hence, would be willing to believe that for the purpose of helping on a revival of religion, its managers would station a trumpeter privately in the belfry of a church, to startle the congregation at a particular point of a sermon on the final judgment, by winding a blast on his instrument as the minister spoke of the sounding of the last trumpet!*

The writer entertains no doubt, that many true

* This transaction is said to have taken place in Massachusetts or Vermont, some four or five years since. The writer saw a printed account of it, but it is not within his reach: it is to be hoped that the publication was not true. But other means, equally exceptionable, are notorious in the career of some of the roving evangelists who have distracted and rent asunder so many churches. The reports, printed and verbal, that have been communicated to the writer respecting the proceedings of the celebrated Mr. Burchard, almost equal in phrensy, if not impiety, the vagaries

conversions have occurred under the system to which he is referring. But as with the ground over which the lightning has gone, scorching and withering every green thing, years may pass away before the arid wastes of the church will be grown over by the living herbage.

These facts and reflections have been introduced in this place, because it is believed that the melancholy and humiliating chapter in the philosophy of the human mind, comprised in the present volume, forms a portion of the same history. The delusion originated in the same spirit of fanaticism which has transformed so many Christian communities in the northern and western parts of New-York, and states contiguous, into places of moral waste and spiritual desolation. The error was cherished and prolonged in the same spirit; and, proceeding step by step from one degree of extravagance to another, at last, under the teachings of the pretended prophet, who had also begun his career in the same school, the measure of iniquity became full and running over. Nor have we seen the end even yet. In the Perfectionism, which began at Albany

of Matthews himself. A gentleman of great respectability states, that when he was in the western part of New-York, a year or two since, he was told by a person whom he perfectly believed, of the following instance of a procedure of Mr. Burchard:—

After having by persuasion and the use of the most exciting language, and even taking hold of individuals, got a company of persons of both sexes upon their knees to pray—ranged in two parallel lines, facing each other—he began to pass up and down between them, crying out, with great violence, repeatedly, "Agonize, I tell you! Why don't you agonize!—agonize!" &c. &c. In this way he continued for a considerable time, exciting them to pray; exclaiming, "Pray away!—Pray away!—I have not had a conversion these twenty minutes!!"

about the time that Matthews commenced his career, and which has recently appeared in New-Haven with some force, as also in several other places in New-England, we may discern another of the same parent. These Perfectionists believe that they have the inward Christ—can do no wrong—that to the pure all things are pure—that Christ is responsible for all they do—and other such blasphemous absurdities. In their practices, too, as the writer is informed, from proofs which cannot in the nature of things be very long concealed, there is reason to apprehend that the licentious abominations of the Fifth Monarchy-men of England, the followers of Joanna Southcote, and the Mormons, will soon find another parallel. Indeed, a section of the Mormons and Perfectionists have been already united, as we have been assured from an intelligent source, while these sheets are passing through the press.

Nor yet is this all. In one of its ramifications, the same delirious enthusiasm which has been exposed in the preceding pages, is still at work and flourishing in the city of New-York, under the conduct of an individual who was associated with "The Holy Club," described in our second chapter, and afterward, for a time, with Mr. Pierson, and the community at Bowery Hill. The eccentric individual referred to, however, who at present is the chief personage in this delusion, is generally esteemed as a well-meaning and sincere man; nor has any moral impropriety ever been alleged against him. He officiates, like Mr. Pierson, in "his own hired house," in an upper room

fitted for the purpose, and his congregation is chiefly composed of females, a large number of whom are in his employ. Every Sunday, and on one or two evenings of the week, he assembles these females, and such visiters of both sexes as choose to attend, for religious meetings. And although he is regarded by his followers as almost superhuman, and professes immediate inspiration, yet all are allowed to speak in their meetings. Many of their speeches consist of revelations, dreams, and visions; and after each has made his or her relation, their prophet interprets them by Divine and infallible authority. He has varied his pretensions at different periods, professing sometimes greater gifts than at others. Some years since he declared himself empowered *by faith to discern spirits, cast out devils, heal diseases*, and perform other *miracles;* and some of his followers have professed to be similarly endowed. He was an intimate friend of Mr. Pierson, and was sent for to anoint Mrs. P. before her death; but did not arrive in time. He was present, however, at the attempted resurrection, and seemed full of faith in the success of that promised miracle. Indeed, he has often practised the anointing of the sick, and some of his followers profess to be living witnesses of his healing powers by the laying on of his hands. He believes that all cases of insanity are examples of diabolical possession, and relates instances of his having cast out devils. In one of these cases of diabolical dispossession, it is related, that "when the devil went out of the man, he barked like a dog." When any of his miracles fail, he alleges

the want of faith in the patient, or on the part of some one present, as the only cause. Some of his followers have spent much time in searching for Captain Kidd's money, both *men and women* having been digging in the earth on Staten-Island, and elsewhere, during whole nights. Trances are not unfrequent among them, in which they obtain marvellous revelations. A short time since, a black woman fell into a trance, which is said to have lasted three days and nights, and being one of the disciples, she related her manifestations at the meeting, saying that she had been *in heaven* and *in hell*, in which latter place she saw several of the ministers who now reside in this city, whose names she repeated. Subsequently she visited a number of them at their houses, as the bearer of a message from the other world, which she was commanded to deliver in person. All this was fully credited by the deluded victims of the individual and his associates, to whom allusion has just been made.

It is but just to record, that he refused to acknowledge the impostor Matthews, though urged thereto by his friend Mr. Pierson, because he discerned his spirit. So, also, when Mr. P. himself assumed to be the prophet Elijah, this gentleman would not receive his testimony, and their intercourse ceased soon afterward. And yet, strange as it may seem, the exposure of Matthews, so far from annihilating this delusion, seems only to increase it; and it never was more numerously patronised than at this very time. It is to be feared that some who have narrowly escaped the former,

and have nearly suffered thereby the loss of all things, are even now entangled in the latter snare. Whereunto this matter may grow cannot be foretold: little hazard is incurred, however, by the prediction, that no *good* will come of it, while incalculable *evil* may.

And now, what shall be said in conclusion of the whole matter? In the history of Matthews, and those who both preceded and followed him, the foregoing pages have been written with a view of warning the Christian public, by the presentation of simple facts, against cherishing a spirit of fanaticism. The author has diligently sought for the truth; and he believes he has succeeded in collecting a chain of facts, which, though many of them were of a private nature, are all of an extraordinary and painful character, and are not the less important to be known, that others, looking at their origin, and tracing their progress, may be deterred from the adoption of a course in matters of religion that, by possibility, may lead to the same dangerous extremes, and ultimately into the same dark and painful, if not fatal delusions disclosed in this book.

It has been seen in the course of this narrative how perilous it is for the Christian professor to indulge in an uncharitable and censorious spirit —to set up standards of faith and practice of his own, irrespective of the simple requisitions of the word of God, taken in their most obvious sense, and in their own native simplicity and beauty. It has been well remarked by Robert Philip, that "the men who would say to others, 'stand aside,

for I am holier than thou,' are Pharisees, who have little or no dependence on grace. In like manner, all who plume themselves on being special favourites of Heaven, and despise others as non-elect, pay, of all men, the least respect to the grace they pretend to have received. They either turn it into licentiousness, or employ it as an excuse for idleness." In the melancholy chain of circumstances and events we have been contemplating, illustrations the most ample have been found of the justness of these remarks. The difficulties commenced —the delusion—gross, palpable, and lamentable as it became in its progress, and fatal to the life of one truly excellent man in the end—had its origin in the fanaticism of a single individual—and that person remained the guiding spirit through the whole progress of the mental malady, in all its stages, excepting only in regard to the pretended prophet, of whom she disapproved. We recollect well the remark of a lady of delightful piety—one of the sweetest and most intelligent Christians we ever knew, when the individual referred to commenced her career of lofty pretensions to holiness on her own part, and of fault-finding and cruel denunciations, in regard to the spirit she thus evinced, and the course into which it would lead. The lady to whom we allude is the wife of a clergyman—and no Christian couple on earth, probably, have been more united and happy in their lives, or have diffused a more beneficial and salutary influence in society. She remarked, in substance, that she had seen many instances of this severe and fault-finding

spirit, but never beheld any good resulting from its exercise. On the contrary, those who thus indulged in all uncharitableness, were very certain themselves to run into the extreme, either of an eventual disregard of all religion and the indulgence of excessive gayety on the one hand, or by setting up as the head and leader of a sect on the other. The prediction was speedily fulfilled in the proceedings with which the reader is already acquainted, especially at Bowery Hill.

Undoubtedly the great error of the times in which we live, and especially in our own country, is a tendency to ultraism, not only in regard to the concerns of religion, but likewise in respect to most if not all the great principles and objects which are now engrossing the attention of man. We are running into extremes upon almost every thing we undertake. In politics, we are in danger of carrying the principles of liberty to licentiousness. In matters of philanthropy, instead of that quiet and modest principle of action which would shrink from allowing the right-hand to know what the left is doing, we have too much of parade and ostentation—too much blowing of trumpets. In morals, whenever a hobby is started, we are eager in outvying each other, even beyond the requirements of the moral law itself; and in the impetuosity of this excess of zeal, we grieve to say, the sacred cause of temperance bids fair to be arrested in its progress, if not ruined, by the indiscretions and the fanaticism of its friends. It was in view of this spirit of ultraism that one of the distin-

guished orators at the recent religious anniversaries, shrewdly remarked, that often, when a good cause has been begun, if the Devil finds there is no other way to ruin it, he will turn charioteer himself. No stronger illustration of the truth of this remark could well be added, than is to be found in the recent measures and proceedings of some good men, who are labouring with more zeal than prudence, or knowledge of human nature, in the temperance cause. Not only have we seen the cutting down of orchards, and the pouring of wine into the streets, but grave and reverend divines are at length, in the exuberance of their zeal, proposing to abolish wine in the solemn institution of the Eucharist!*

In the solemn affairs of religion, moreover, instead of looking into our own hearts, and repenting of our own sins, we are striving to look into the

* A series of articles are now in the course of publication in the Connecticut Observer, the writer of which is understood to be the Rev. Dr. Chapin, of Wethersfield, proposing to dispense with wine at the Communion. Among other things, he more than intimates his opinion that much that is taken for *holy enjoyment* at those seasons, is *animal excitement* from the stimulus, or intoxicating effect of the wine; and that church-members take a carnal pleasure in the liquor. Professor Hitchcock, of Amherst, is also understood to be writing to the same effect. A highly-valued clerical friend, now in New-York, has given the writer the following extract from a dialogue between himself and one of these ultra-preachers of temperance:—

"Well, Mr. *****, supposing Jesus Christ came on the earth again, and should happen into a prayer-meeting of your disciples, and as he entered the whisper should go round that he had just come from making wine for a festive occasion, where the party had already drunk pretty well before—would you ask him to make a prayer?"

"No!" (striking his fist upon the table), "that I would not," was the reply!

hearts of others, and take care of them, in our own way, and to the danger, we fear, of our own souls. The appointed means of grace are contemned; we wish to do the work of the Spirit, as it were, by machinery; and instead of depending upon the Spirit of God, and seeking to catch the genial currents of that wind which bloweth where it listeth and of which we only hear the sound, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, we are striving to raise hurricanes ourselves. But unless the writer is greatly deceived in his estimate of the facts detailed in the present volume, they ought to stand as a solemn warning against the indulgence of this ultra, self-righteous, and fanatical spirit—this seeking out of human inventions in matters of such high concernment as those of the salvation of men. How much wiser, safer, and better, than the running after every new thing, and the following of so many blind guides, would it be for Christian professors to obey the injunction of God himself: "*Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see,* AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, *where is the* GOOD WAY, *and* WALK THEREIN, *and ye shall find rest for your souls.*"

The contents of this little volume also teach another lesson which should not be suffered to pass unheeded. It is not the low, the ignorant, and the vulgar who have been the subjects of the delusions we have been unfolding; but, at every stage of them, and in all their variety of aspects, those subjects have been found among highly respectable and intelligent citizens—ladies, educated, accom-

plished, virtuous—and gentlemen of character—acute in business—men of wealth, of information, and of great public and private worth. How important, then, in view of our dependence, and the frailty of our nature, the caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." And again, in the language of God to Jeremiah, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME." The rule of action in all doubtful matters, both in religion and morals, is very clear and simple: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

In conclusion, it may be remarked that ERROR can only be overcome by TRUTH, and that they who have the "TRUTH OF GOD" distinctly set forth in the book of Revelation, have an infallible criterion by which to test the true character of any religious opinion or practice. And in the gospel dispensation introduced by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the inspired volumes of the Old and New Testaments constitute the true and only infallible rule of faith and conduct; nor can any radical or fundamental error long escape detection when subjected to this plain and unerring standard.

APPENDIX.

[After the present volume was more than half completed, and after that portion of it containing the principal extracts from Mr. Pierson's papers had been stereotyped, the writer obtained for examination some hundred or more pages of his manuscripts and journals, of the existence of which he was not before apprized. Had he received these papers at an earlier day, some farther use would have been made of them in their chronological order. Even as it is, a few additional extracts have been made, and are here added by way of appendix, as tending to the farther elucidation of the character of Mr. Pierson, and as matters of curiosity.]

A.

The following document is a copy of the prayer and covenant of Mr. Pierson, made, probably, on connecting himself with the church, Jan. 2, 1820. It was written out, and signed and sealed—a practice recommended by Dr. Doddridge and other eminent experimental Christian writers. Nothing can breathe a more fervent and delightful spirit of piety than this instrument, and the renewal of it six months afterward. How strange, that a sun which rose so brightly, should have gone down in deepest gloom!

O thou great and greatly exalted and incomprehensible Jehovah, who alone art God, and who alone art worthy of the praises and adorations of all thy creatures—thou who searchest the hearts of the children of men, search my heart, O my God, and make it sincere in the high privilege in which it is now to be engaged.

O my God, I, the creature of thy power, desire with great humility and abasement of soul to deplore my past rebellion

against thee, and against thy holy and righteous laws, and desire to lay down the weapons of my rebellion against thee as my lawful Sovereign, Creator, and Preserver. Great and exalted God, who art the Lord of lords and King of kings, though thou art exalted above all comprehension, yet thou condescendest to become the Saviour of sinners through Jesus Christ thy dearly beloved Son.

In the name of this precious Saviour do I, who am a lost, perishing sinner, desire to come to thee and take hold of thy strength, that I may make peace with thee, O Lord, and be enabled to be at peace with thee. With a heart filled with gratitude at thy condescension to the children of men, I desire, by this solemn and deliberate act, to accept of this precious Saviour, Jesus Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel; to renew the vows made for me in baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and those vows which by thy grace thou hast enabled me to make in a public manner in thy sanctuary, and this day again renewedly to dedicate myself to thee, O my God, to be thine in an everlasting covenant, choosing and cleaving to thee as the desire of my heart, and only portion for time and for eternity, renouncing the world and its vanities, consecrating myself and all that I am and have to thy service and glory.

Be pleased, blessed God, to accept the offering here made thee (with an humble dependance on thy helping grace, which alone will enable me to perform my vows). Grant me, O my Father, the fulness of thy love and grace in Jesus Christ. Let me be washed in the precious blood of the dear Redeemer; let me be clothed in his righteousness; let me be sanctified by his spirit, and transformed more and more into his image. Number me among thy peculiar people; inscribe my name in the Lamb's book of life; grant me the blessed Comforter to comfort me, to teach me, and to lead me in the way of all truth. Put thy fear in my heart, that it may never depart from thee; write thy law upon my heart that it may be a light to my feet and lamp to my path; grant me a double portion of meekness, lowliness, and humility. Enable me to walk humbly with thee, my God; grant me perfect resignation to thy holy will; enable me to spend the remainder of my days in thy service, and in the light and under the smiles of thy countenance. O my God and Father, when thou seest me going astray from thy holy commandments, let this cove-

nant pass in remembrance before thee, O my beloved Father, and wilt thou in tender mercy lead me quickly back to the true and living way! Grant me grace to keep this covenant: and when it shall please thee to call me hence, wilt thou look down on me, thy languishing, dying child, and in covenant love strengthen and support me in that trying moment, and enable me with my latest breath to glorify thee, the faithful and everlasting God, and then receive my spirit, that it may dwell with Jesus its Redeemer, and behold his glory. And now, holy and blessed Father, for the sake of Jesus the Son of thy love, blot out all my manifold transgressions, and forgive me freely for his sake who died for sinners.

What thou seest amiss in this solemn transaction, forgive; what thou seest I need that I have not asked, grant.

Accept me now, O my beloved Father. My heart's desire is to be thine for ever. O that this desire might be sincere, and come up acceptably before thee. To thee, the only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be rendered everlasting praises. Amen. ELIJAH PIERSON. [L. S.]

New-York, Sunday, January 2, 1820.

Most holy and blessed God, my heavenly Father, I desire to confirm this covenant, and renewedly to dedicate myself to thee, my God and Creator, to deplore and lament my past unworthiness and unprofitableness, and in view of them to be deeply humbled before thee, my God, and cast myself upon thy free and sovereign mercy in Jesus Christ; and with an humble dependance upon thy helping grace, desire to renounce the world and its vanities, to choose thee, my heavenly Father, as my portion for time and for eternity.

O Lord God, for Christ's sake, accept me; draw my affections from all created good, that they may centre in thee alone; give me holiness of heart; give me greater conformity to thee; fire my soul with holy love to thee; sanctify me by thy holy spirit; grant me sweet communion with thee, my Father, and give me the spirit of thy children.

Greatly strengthen thou me for all the duties and trials of life; as my day is, so let my strength be. Fit me to live, and prepare me for death; and when I shall have finished my course, may my spirit for ever rest in the bosom of Christ its Redeemer. Amen. ELIJAH PIERSON.

New-York, July 4, 1820.

B.

FORMATION OF MR. PIERSON'S CHURCH AT BOWERY HILL.

[The following is Mr. Pierson's account of the manner in which he and his associates constituted the Bowery Hill Church, under his own ministration, describing the forms and ceremonies observed.]

Sunday, Feb. 28, 1830. It was a very rainy day, and none of us contemplated going out. Mrs. P. was ill in her bed, but well enough heartily to unite in this transaction.

We assembled in the back room down stairs, E. P., S. P., Catharine P., and T. G. Freeman.

After reading the 1st of Acts, and prayer, we were moved by the Holy Ghost to form ourselves into a Church, after the following manner:—

In the first place, I (E. P.) was set apart by prayer and laying on of hands for the work.

Next, Sarah was set apart in the same manner for the same purpose. After, Timothy and Caty, in the same way, to join and receive the right hand of fellowship, when they were regularly dismissed from their present connexions.

I then gave the right hand of fellowship to Sarah, and greeted her with a holy kiss, and welcomed her to all the privileges and blessings of the Church of Christ.

During the exercises, we all enjoyed, in a remarkable manner, the presence of Jesus.

Sarah and myself had special witness from the Lord that we had done according to the mind of the Lord, and that he was well pleased with our faith and obedience in doing it.

When we had done, the Lord bade me write it in a book. I then wrote the covenant, which was signed by me and her.

We used frequently to unite together in prayer concerning the Church, and it appeared as if the Lord was well pleased with us in the matter, and always gave us precious encouragement about its prosperity. Once he presented a Bible, all gold, opened to the Acts of the Apostles, to the view of Sarah's mind. To me Jesus appeared to come in kingly attire, with a crown.

I was exceedingly desirous of being instructed in his word, that we might in every thing follow him. I heard a word saying, When he came he would teach us all things.

C.

[It will be recollected, that Matthews pretended to be a Jew; and Mr. Pierson, after he was transformed first into Elijah the Tishbite, and afterward into John the Baptist, imagined himself to have become a Jew also. Matthias preached, and Pierson then believed, that the Jews were guiltless of the crucifixion of the Saviour. The following is Mr. Pierson's argument upon the question, found by the writer among his papers.]

Who are legally accountable for the death of Jesus of Nazareth?

It is written, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him. Mark x., 33, 34.

Matt. xx., 19. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify.

Luke xviii., 32, 33. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, and they shall scourge him and put him to death.

Jesus delivered to the Gentiles.

Matt. xxvii., 2. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

John xix., 10. Then saith Pilate unto Jesus, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Luke xxiii., 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

Matt. xxvii., 26. Then released he Barabbas unto them. And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto them the whole band. And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe; and when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they took the robe from off him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify.

Luke xxiii., 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the malefactors.

John xix., 34, 38. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side.

And after this Joseph of Arimathea besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave him leave.

Comments.

From the above portions of Scripture we learn, that Jesus was betrayed unto the chief priests and scribes, and by them delivered to the Roman governor in Judea, Pontius Pilate, who gave sentence against him, and delivered him to his own soldiers, who put on him the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, mocked him, spit on him, and crucified him, and pierced him in his side, when dead delivering his body to Joseph for interment.

This narrative in the Scriptures is so clear and conclusive, that no shade of doubt can arise against the conclusion that the Roman governor is legally accountable for the death of Jesus of Nazareth. And that when the Avenger of his blood shall come, it will be required of the Gentiles.

Again: long before the death of Jesus took place, the nationality of the Jews had ceased, and they were governed by governors put over them by the Roman emperors, Pontius Pilate being the Roman governor at that time.

The lawful rulers of a country are held accountable for the transactions done under their control; they only have a right to use force to prevent crime and to execute the laws.

Thus Paul was rescued by the Roman governor from the people, who were desirous of killing him. Acts xxi., 31, 32, 33.

The custom of the Roman government was to leave their conquered provinces the free exercise of their religious opinions and ceremonies, and this the Jews continued to do, with little interruption, till Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

The chief priests and scribes say, John xviii., 31, in an-

swer to Pilate's request that they should take Jesus, and judge him according to their laws, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Yet they say, John xix., 7, "The Jews answered him, we have a law, and by our law he ought to die."

These show us, that the right to put persons to death had been taken from them by the Romans. Matt. xxvii., 25. "Then answered all the people and said, his blood be upon us and on our children." When God makes inquisition for blood, he will seek for it where it is, in the hands of the guilty, and that upon legal principles, however men may determine to the contrary.

The position, that Gentiles are guilty of the blood of Jesus of Nazareth, enables us to determine the application of the parable of the vineyard and husbandmen, Matt. xxi., 32, 41, Mark xii., 1–9, Luke xx., 9, 16. It is said, "When the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen? He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Matt. xxi., 40, 41.

This parable had a partial application to those who heard it from the mouth of Jesus.

But its grand application is to those who killed the Son, and the killing of the Son is the moving cause of the determination of the Lord to destroy them, and give the vineyard to others who will make a good use of it.

Thus we see that the ark is to be taken from the Gentiles, and to be restored to the Jews. Obadiah says, 15, 16, 17, "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen, as thou hast done it shall be done to thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

"For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, shall all the heathen drink continually; yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness."

Paul, in Rom. xi., 20, says, "The branches were broken off, that the Gentiles might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded. For if God spared not the natural branches, lest he spare not thee.

"Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on

them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

What application can be made of Paul's doctrine? Have the Gentiles stood in the faith? Is the institution called the Church now in the world like that established by the Saviour and his apostles? Do its present condition and character agree with the pattern left for their guidance and direction?

Are the people called Christians all of one heart and one soul? Have they all things common like those of old? Are their teachers filled with faith and the Holy Ghost? Do they heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils?

If these things have not been, and continued to be done, then the Spirit of Jesus and his apostles is not with them; they are bastards, and not true-born sons. Then the Gentiles have not stood in the faith, and God will not spare them, but will cut them off, and give the vineyard to others, bringing forth the fruits thereof. The inquiry may be made.

D.

AGAINST SHAVING OFF THE BEARD.

[The reason of wearing his beard long has been briefly noticed in this volume, in the manner stated by Mr. Pierson to a friend in conversation. Among his papers, the writer has discovered the following argument upon the subject, which is certainly entitled to the praise of ingenuity.]

Why should a man wear his beard?

Ans. Because God made him with it.

When God made man it is said, "So God created man in his image." Gen. i., 26, 27.

When Adam came perfect from the hands of his Maker, he had a full-grown beard. Does any one suppose he shaved it off while in paradise?

When God sent his Son Jesus into the world, he was seen with a beard according to his age.

Jesus said, John xiv., 9, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

In Adam and Jesus we have the two witnesses of God, declaring and confirming to men in all ages and to all the

world, what his mind is on this subject,—for in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. Besides, these witnesses have never been corrupted by traditions of men. Their testimony is of the purest character. If Adam was to reappear in the world, would he not be surprised to see beardless men, and inquire whether they were ashamed of him, their father, on account of his beard, or say, You think you have become wiser than God was when he made me in his image?

When God gave his people a code of laws for their government by Moses, shaving was expressly forbidden. Levit. xix., 27. "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard." Levit. xxi. 5. "Neither shall they shave off the corners of their beard."

God's chosen people wore the beard; it was considered a reproach to be without it.—See 2 Sam., x., 4. "Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and sent them away. When they told unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho (a frontier city) until your beards be grown, and return."

God made our bodies for himself to dwell and walk in. 2 Cor. vi., 14–18. "I will dwell in them and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

When God made our bodies, was there a deficiency of wisdom? Who is authorized to alter or disfigure God's dwelling? Rom. ix., 20.* "Shall the thing formed say," &c.

What does shaving preach?

Ans. That God has given us something not only useless, but burdensome, and that we must almost daily be at the trouble of ridding ourselves of it. Thus we daily reproach our Maker, and his Son Jesus. Rom. ix., 20.

It is said that it is singular. This forms no objection why it should not be practised.

Because it is singular for men to be holy in this age, will any one say we ought not to be holy? Men often pray to be like Jesus. Now, if their prayers were never answered, would they have beards?

* Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed, why hast thou made me thus?—*Note by Mr. Folger.*

Who was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God?

Ans. A Jew. If the Son be a Jew, what is the Father? Jesus said, John iv., 22, "Salvation is of the Jews. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship." Again he says, John xiv. 9, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

When God appears, his sons are to be like him. 1 John iii., 3.

The beard is the grand visible distinction between the male and female. It denotes age, wisdom, strength, and gives dignity to the being God has made lord of his creation.

Henceforth, men who become holy will wear their beards by the appointment of God.

Children have no beards: so those who are children in the kingdom of God will have no beards, till they be grown to the age and stature of young men.

E.

THE SABBATH OF YEARS.

[The following meditation contains Mr. Pierson's notions respecting the Seventh Millennium, or the great Sabbath of years.]

June 28, 1832. Meditation. God made all his works in five days, and the sixth day made man, and gave them commandment what to do, and rested on the seventh day.

This is a type of what God is about to do now; viz:

The new creation is to be completed and made perfect before the Sabbath of years begins, that is, before the six thousand years are ended, that God may rest from all his works on the seventh thousand years.

The new creation is the new heavens and new earth for men to dwell in, and new men after God's image, holy, and that entire renovation of the animal and vegetable world which is needful. The entire destruction and banishment of the wicked from the earth before the six thousand years are ended.

God will then have nothing to do but rest on the seventh thousand years, and bless them, and enjoy the fruit of his labour.

The world to be a Garden of Eden.

[The consecration of his house in Fourth-street, as a place of worship, after his removal from the Bowery Hill, has been mentioned in the text. The following entry occurs in his diary upon the subject.]

Friday evening, 6 *o'clock*, *April* 19, 1832. Finished fixing the carpets, cleaning the house, &c.

While meditating on the goodness of God for his help and aid in all our moving, the Spirit said, Sanctify your house unto the Lord.

I was directed to go into every room, from the cellar to the garret, praying that God would take up his abode with me in the house. Keep all evil from us, let no destroyer come nigh us, keep us from fire and all hurtful elements, give me power to speak his words. Grant hearing ears to the people, &c. &c.

[The particular occasion of the following entry is not known.]

June 3*d and* 4*th*, 1833. Go not anywhere abroad. Hide thyself three months till the indignation be overpast. I will bring evil upon this place, such as has never been, because they have rejected my words, and thee my servant.

Wo, wo, wo unto this place.

F.

DOCTOR CONDICT'S STATEMENT.

[The elder Doctor Condict, a physician of standing, and a gentleman of high respectability, conceiving that his testimony on the trial had not been correctly reported, has transmitted to the writer the following statement respecting the *post mortem* examination of Mr. Pierson's body, in full. It is deemed of sufficient importance for insertion entire.]

On the 18th August, 1834, the body of Elijah Pierson was disinterred for examination. The surface of it was of a dark chocolate colour, and the face nearly black. The abdomen was laid open, a ligature passed round the œsophagus above the stomach, and another round the intestine below the stomach, and the stomach then taken out of the body. It

seemed evidently less changed than any of the surrounding parts. Its texture was firm and unimpaired. It could be handled freely and roughly, without rupturing or injuring its coats. When first viewed, it was collapsed and contracted into a small mass, and apparently empty. Externally, its colour was scarcely changed, except on its anterior portion and near its lower orifice, where it showed a redness, and its vascularity was increased. Putrefaction had not apparently begun in any part of the stomach. The body was extremely offensive, and traces of inflammation of the stomach being evident upon its outer surface, it was taken home for further inspection, and the body was again buried.

Upon opening the stomach, there was found near the lower orifice, called the *pylorus*, a teaspoonful or more of mucus, of a dark brown colour, about the consistence of paste or starch. A little farther from the lower orifice or pylorus, and upon the forepart of the stomach, was found a substance resembling wet chalk or calomel, of a dingy whitish colour, in quantity equal to about 8 or 10 grains of calomel. The upper portion of the inner membrane, and about one half of its entire surface, was nearly natural in appearance, except being more vascular. A spot or patch, of a bright red colour, somewhat circular, and about three inches in diameter, was found, extending from about an inch distant from the pylorus, along the forepart of the stomach, and corresponding with the red spot upon the outside which was first described. It was here that the whitish substance resembling wet chalk was found. Half an inch higher was another spot, of the same red colour, and about one third the size of the former. By the sides of these red spots or patches were three or four other patches, about the size of a twenty-five cent piece, of a dark brown colour, almost black; and under these dark spots, the inner membrane, or inner lining of the stomach, sometimes called its mucous coat, was very soft, pulpy, and disorganized. This inner, or mucous membrane, at these dark spots, was somewhat elevated—was readily scraped off by the finger nail or back of the knife, feeling very pulpy when rubbed between the fingers. Beneath this coat or membrane there was an effusion or extravasation of dark blood, having somewhat the appearance of being charred. This extravasated blood, lying between the two coats called the mucous and the mus-

cular coat, had elevated the former by separating these two coats, and gave the dark colour to these spots; and when removed, the muscular coat, upon which the dark blood was spread, showed a bright red colour, extending a considerable distance around the dark spots, with increased thickness of substance, and enlargement of bloodvessels. The whole internal surface of the stomach seemed devoid of putrefaction. Nothing was found in the stomach except the little mucus first mentioned, and the chalk-like powder.

The stomach and its little contents were carefully placed in a jar, and sent to Dr. Torrey, Professor of Chymistry in New-York, for the purpose of analyzing them, and it is understood and believed that no poisonous substance was detected.

On the 21st of March, 1835, the body of Mr. Pierson was again disinterred, with a view to an examination of the intestines and œsophagus, which conducts food from the mouth into the stomach. The body externally had advanced considerably in the putrefactive stage. The flesh about the limbs was giving way and falling off. What remained of the lungs was about the size of a fist, and black. The liver and spleen had entirely disappeared. The œsophagus or gullet was drawn down, and cut off high up in the throat, and with a considerable portion of the intestines, was carried home for examination. The gullet, at its end near the stomach, where it had been divided in August, was found to be reddened, and somewhat thickened, for about an inch and a half. It was slit open its whole length, and the remainder appeared natural, the redness below gradually diminishing till it disappeared. The whole was firm and unyielding, having very little if any appearance of dissolution or of tenderness. Different portions were cut off from the intestinal tube at different places, the feculent matters scraped off, rinsed in water, and spread open. No marks of redness appeared about them, nor any appearance of decay. They were very firm and unyielding. They could not be torn by the fingers, and possessed more tenacity than the gullet. It was remarked, on cutting through the muscles or fleshy covering of the lower belly, immediately over the intestines, that the flesh here was firm, and not decayed or decomposed more than it is usually found to be in the dead subject a few days after death. There was very little if any offensive smell at

the grave, and on inspecting the intestines after being taken home, the only odour that was perceived was precisely like that which is noticed on opening a box of old smoked herring. This was very perceptible, and was first noticed by Dr. Canfield, whose position with respect to the wind was such as to enable him first to remark it.

The examinations made in August and in March were in presence of the same gentlemen, viz., Drs. Johns, Canfield, and the two Condicts.

After the first examination, they unanimously concurred in the opinion, that the appearances of the stomach were such as to induce a strong apprehension that Mr. Pierson's death had been occasioned by *violent means*, and not by the progress of any known disease, terminating fatally. That there was great reason to apprehend that his death had been produced by some poisonous substance taken into the stomach. An opinion to this effect was committed to writing, was signed by each of the physicians just named, and their affidavits taken to attest their belief of its truth. They were all subpœnaed to attend the trial of Matthews alias Matthias, as witnesses, in April, and they all attended excepting Dr. Canfield. Two of them only were examined, and their examinations were limited almost exclusively to the appearances of the stomach. Dr. Johns was not sworn or questioned. The trial was arrested on the second day, and no opportunity given to the medical witnesses to show the authorities, or cite the cases, or explain the reasons, upon which their united opinion was formed.

They well knew that professional men held various opinions on some of the points in question. They knew that other physicians, entertaining different opinions on some of these points, would probably be called to express their opinions without having seen the stomach. They were strangers in a strange land, unknown to the jury, to the bar, and to the court, with but one exception. Their opinion in respect to the death of Mr. Pierson was known as well to the whole neighbouring country as it was to the court and the jury. But their *reasons* for this opinion, and the *authorities* in support of it, they had no opportunity to offer. The cause was arrested from some defect of evidence relating to the symptoms, or to some other point, and of course no medical books were quoted. In course of the examination and cross-

examination of the two Drs. Condict, many questions were asked concerning the symptoms which follow the administration of arsenic, and the manner in which arsenic produces death, as well as the appearances which natural diseases produce in the stomach, resembling in some respects those which follow the use of arsenic. And during this examination, an opinion was expressed, that the appearances in Pierson's case led to the suspicion, perhaps to the *belief*, that arsenic had passed into his stomach, although none had been actually detected by chymical investigation. The appearances indicated arsenic more pointedly than any other poison; and yet it would not be safe to conclude, *absolutely* and *certainly*, that death was caused by arsenic, unless arsenic was found in the stomach. It was stated that arsenic might produce death, and that many instances were on record in which it had *been known* to be taken, and yet none was found after death. It might be all carried off by active vomiting and purging, and yet produce death, and none remain in the stomach. The case of Mr. Chapman, of Pennsylvania, was mentioned. No arsenic was found upon a chymical analysis. Two or three most respectable physicians testified, that taking all the appearances and symptoms together, they believed Chapman died from poisoning with arsenic. Mina, the Spaniard, accused of the murder, was found guilty, and was hanged. The appearances of Chapman's stomach most strikingly resembled Pierson's. The stomach and parts adjacent resisted putrefaction, and remained sound a long time after death. Christison and Orfila were mentioned as high authorities, and as containing many cases in which the morbid appearances of the stomach, after death from arsenic, were precisely the same as in Pierson's case.

Among other effects of arsenic, it was stated, that it tended to preserve animal substances from putrefaction. That there were many cases on record of persons and animals poisoned by arsenic, in which putrefaction did not take place for months, and in some instances, for years, after death. Medical authors do not all unite in the belief that arsenic resists putrefaction, yet the recorded facts are so numerous and strong as to enforce conviction with many.

A small quantity of Fowler's solution of arsenic was put into a human stomach taken from the Almshouse in Phila-

delphia, for an experiment. It was left for two or three months in Dr. Mitchill's laboratory, and did not putrefy in that time. It had the strong herring smell, as in Pierson's case, and as in Chapman's case. Christison, in his late and celebrated treatise on Poisons, page 258, says, "I have kept a bit of an ox's stomach four years in a solution of arsenic, and except slight shrivelling and whitening, I could not observe any change in it." Some older writers have entertained the opinion, that bodies poisoned by arsenic or other active poisons, are hurried as it were into putrefaction. Later experience, and many well-attested facts, show the fallacy of this opinion. If a few instances may have seemed to give it some support, there were probably some peculiar circumstances sufficient to account for the early decay, independently of the poison. In page 255, Christison says, "Arsenic possesses the singular property of enabling the bodies of men and animals poisoned with it, both to *resist* decay *unusually long*, and to decay in an *unusual manner*." He then proceeds to mention various cases. In the Ursinus case, one body had been buried six months, and was not putrid. Another body buried two and a half years was found *not putrid*, but *dried up* as it were. Dogs poisoned with arsenic, and left unburied two months in a damp cellar, their flesh and alimentary canal were found *fresh* and *red*, as if *pickled*. The bodies were then buried for eight months in a wet place, when the intestines were found red and entire, and the flesh mostly unaltered. In other instances, carcasses buried *three years* were found to be dry and *undecayed*. In page 257, he mentions the Begreuth case, three bodies of persons disinterred, one five months, one six months, and a third one fourteen months after death. The external parts were found not properly putrid, but hard and cheesy. In two of them the intestines were *entire*, could be *handled*, *tied*, *taken out*, and cut up. In one, a sloughy spot found near the pylorus. Arsenic was found in two of the bodies. Dr. Kelch buried the internal organs of a man killed by arsenic, whose body had been unburied till the outer parts began to decay. Five months after, he examined the stomach and intestines, which had a peculiar smell, quite different from putrid bowels. They were not yet acted on by putrefaction, but were as *fresh* as *when first taken from the body*, and might have served to make anatomical preparations. Had

lost nothing of their *colour*, *glimmer*, or *firmness*. The inflamed spots on the stomach had not disappeared, and the small intestines showed in some places the inflammatory redness unchanged. Warden's case, p. 258.—Body buried three weeks. Mucous coat of the stomach, except its mere surface, *very firm*, and all the morbid appearances quite distinct. Three weeks after disinterment the vascularity had disappeared; but the membranes, and the appearances in them, *remained in the same state*. Metzger's case.—An old man died after six hours illness. Three drachms of arsenic were found in his stomach. "The body was kept ten days before burial. Eight days afterward it was disinterred. No *sign of putrefaction anywhere*."

Dr. Woolper says, "bodies poisoned by arsenic resist putrefaction;" and it is well known that it is used in stuffing birds and beasts for preservation from decay.

Dr. Borges relates a case, in which, fourteen weeks after death, the stomach and intestines were found *firm*, of a grayish white, containing crumbs of bread. The other organs were pulpy, and the internal parts were cheesy. The Chennitz case, in page 25 of Christison.—"In 1726, five weeks after burial, the skin everywhere was putrid—the stomach and intestines *perfectly* fresh."

In the Warden case, appearances were precisely the same. "Three weeks after burial, external parts much decayed:—three weeks later, the stomach and intestines were found by Christison in a state of almost *perfect preservation*." Dr. Borges killed a rabbit in less than a day with ten grains of arsenic, buried it thirteen months under the eaves of a house. When dug up, the skin, muscles, ligaments, and all the organs except the stomach and intestines, had disappeared, not leaving a trace. The alimentary canal, from the throat to the anus, with the hair, and bare bones, quite *entire*. When the arsenic is all discharged *suddenly* by vomiting, the stomach and body may decay suddenly. Mitchell lived seven days in great distress—vomited much,—"the stomach was removed for minute examination. It decayed *rapidly*, and in twenty-four hours its examination was impracticable, while *the body resisted putrefaction*." Harles says, "This singular property of arsenic is now no longer *doubtful*. Certain circumstances will limit it or impair it, while others will favour or increase it either by the soil of the burying-ground or the

air of the vault. These affect the decomposition of all bodies *indiscriminately*, and will therefore affect the antiseptic properties of arsenic. It would be absurd to ascribe to arsenic the power of preventing putrefaction in *all* cases. Those who use it for preserving skins, know well it does not possess it under *all* circumstances—nor does any other antiseptic—not even *alcohol*."

Page 261. "In many instances of poisoning with arsenic, the body has been found long after death in so *perfect a state of preservation*, as to admit of an accurate medicinal inspection and successful chymical analysis."

The proofs are numerous and strong, of the power of arsenic to resist putrefaction and preserve animal substances from decay; and the high state of preservation in which Mr. Pierson's internal parts were found, *seven months after death*, affords strong ground of suspicion of its use in his case. The cases recorded both in Christison and in Orfila, giving in detail the morbid appearances of the stomach of persons killed by arsenic, corresponding precisely with those found in Pierson's stomach, are amply sufficient to justify the written opinion expressed by the four examining physicians, that the presumption was strong, that Pierson came to his death by *violent* means—that he died *not of natural disease*. They all looked upon arsenic as the *probable* cause of his death, although they found no *positive proof*.

Pierson died *alone*. No physician saw him. No account could be had of his symptoms, except that he manifested great distress by his groans, and died in convulsions—spasms following each other in quick and rapid succession for thirty-six or forty-eight hours or more, with a paralytic affection of the limbs of one side. He had been subject to epilepsy in a mild form, one spasm perhaps in ten days or two weeks, lasting from five to ten minutes, and then leaving him with a perfect recollection and remembrance of all that had passed in his presence during the paroxysm. The arsenic (if given) produced high irritation and extreme distress of the stomach; and nothing would more readily produce convulsions ending in death, in an epileptic patient, than an irritated state of the stomach.

If the symptoms could have been *known*, and had corroborated the evidence which the stomach itself so plainly showed after death—if to the symptoms, and to the morbid state of

the stomach, be added the sound condition—the unputrefied state of the œsophagus and intestines, seven months and a half after death, there probably would have been found few persons, either on the bench, at the bar, or in the jury-box, who could resist the conclusion that arsenic was the cause of his death,—by whom administered, is a question for others than medical men to try and determine.

G.

[When the present work was projected, about the close of the month of April, a letter was addressed by Dr. A. W. Ives, in behalf of the writer, to the Rev. Mr. Kirk of Albany, for such information as he might be able to furnish respecting the commencement of the prophetical career of Matthews in Albany. Mr. Kirk replied very promptly, but the letter was nearly a month in reaching its destination; and the work was more than half through the press when it was received. It is now inserted in this place.]

Albany, May 2, 1835.

Dr. A. W. Ives;

Dear Sir,—Your communication came to me in the pressure of business. I would not add to the obloquy already resting on the wicked man to whom you refer. But if I can state any facts which may help to guard others against his vile impositions, I will cheerfully contribute them. He called upon me about the time when the church under my care was organized, which was in February, 1829. In our first interview, his conversation was sensible, scriptural, and in the highest tone of the reforming spirit. But there was nothing very remarkable to make a favourable or unfavourable impression. He subscribed a small sum towards the erection of our church edifice. It was remarked at the time by some of whom he had purchased lumber, "He is a lazy, thriftless, dishonest fellow; and will never pay it." Whether the declaration was true or not, the prophecy was. He applied for admission to our church, and at the same time made severe

and unfounded charges against two of its most respectable members. Every inquiry we made satisfied us that we should bring a firebrand into our society if he were admitted. We accordingly rejected his application. But finding his family in want of suitable clothing, we provided for them, that they might attend the services of public worship. This was objected to by many of our church, because he was a very ingenious, skilful carpenter, who could command the highest wages; and therefore, by our charity, we were said to be sustaining him in idleness. And this proved to be true. He would neither work nor let others work. He was an incessant talker. And being a stanch advocate for temperance, he would go to workshops, and irritate the men by his dogmatic and injudicious mode of urging that important cause. It was frequently said, at that time, that he would stay in grocery stores at night, proclaiming the doctrines of temperance, until he was turned out. I saw but little of him from the time of his rejection by our session. But the more I saw, the more I suspected the purity of his zeal, and the more manifest it was, that his disposition was exceedingly unlovely and unchristian.

The next peculiar information I had concerning him, was by a note sent to my pulpit one Sabbath morning from the mayor of the city, calling on the citizens to turn out and search for Matthews, who had gone off in a strange manner with his children, and left his wife in great distress and alone. Search was accordingly made; he was found thirty miles from the city. His account of the matter was, that Albany was Sodom, and to be immediately destroyed; and he had fled with his children for safety. I believe he was imprisoned a little while as an insane man. I saw him soon after with a long beard, haranguing in the street; and was convinced that he meant to take advantage of his notoriety, and by imposing on the credulous, find an easier way to get food and raiment than by the exercise of his mechanical skill and industry. I then lost sight and sound of him for some time, until the name of *Matthias the Prophet* was reported from New-York. A little inquiry developed the fact that this was the very Robert Matthews who had proved himself here either insane or an impostor. From that time you can trace him. I may mention one other circumstance upon which I have recently obtained light. I saw Mr. Folger after Matthias's

arrest, and asked him how he could be deluded by so bad a man. He told me it was solely by his entire confidence in Mr. Pierson; and that Matthews had told him I agreed entirely in doctrine with him (M.). Now the fact which this explains is, that Mr. Pierson called and introduced himself to me, perhaps two years ago, and talked on the subject of religion in a way which I did not then understand. But I now see that the poor fellow came to have the assertion of Matthews confirmed. This deliberate lie, when mentioned by Mr. Folger, convinced me he was not crazy. And yet I consider this whole affair as affording a melancholy confirmation of this truth—When a man begins to do wrong, he knows not where he will end. "Is thy servant a dog," &c., I have thought again and again, while reading the horrible detail of this man's career since I first saw him. You may use my name or communication in any way.

E. N. KIRK.

H.

It was not, however, until Deslon, a French physician of some eminence, had announced himself a convert and joined Mesmer in the practice of magnetism, that it acquired much renown. Their method of operating was as follows:—

In the centre of the room was placed a vessel of an oval or circular shape, about four feet in diameter and one foot deep. In this were laid a number of bottles, disposed in radii, with their necks directed outward, well corked and filled with magnetized water. Water was then poured into the vessel so as to cover the bottles, and occasionally pounded glass or filings of iron were added to the water. This vessel was termed the *baquet*. From its cover, which was pierced with many holes, issued long, thin, moveable rods of iron, which could be applied by the patients to the affected part. Besides, to the ring of the cover was attached a cord which, when the patients were seated in a circle, was carried round them all so as to form a chain of connexion; a second chain was formed by the union of their hands, and it was recommended that they should sit so close that those adjoining should touch by their knees and feet, which was supposed wonderfully to facilitate the passage of the magnetic fluid. In addition to this, the magnet-

lets went round, placed themselves *en rapport* with the patients, embraced them between their knees, and gently rubbed them down along the course of the nerves, using gentle pressure over different regions of the chest and abdomen. The effect of such treatment on delicate women might have been foretold, but it was not left to work alone.

The house which Mesmer inhabited was delightfully situated; his rooms spacious and sumptuously furnished; stained glass and coloured blinds shed a dim, religious light; mirrors gleamed at intervals along the walls; a mysterious silence was preserved, delicate perfumes floated in the air, and occasionally the melodious sounds of the harmonica or the voice came to lend their aid to his magnetic powers. His *salons* became the daily resort of all that was brilliant and *spirituel* in the Parisian fashionable world. Ladies of rank, whom indolence, voluptuous indulgence, or satiety of pleasure, had filled with vapours or nervous affections; men of luxurious habits, enervated by enjoyment, who had drained sensuality of all that it could offer, and gained in return a shattered constitution and premature old age, came in crowds to seek after the delightful emotions and novel sensations which this mighty magician was said to dispense. They approached with imaginations heated by curiosity and desire; they believed, because they were ignorant; and this belief was all that was required for the action of the magnetic charm. The women, always the most ardent in enthusiasm, first experienced yawnings, stretching, then slight nervous spasms, and finally, crises of excitation, according as the assistant magnetizers (*jeunes hommes, beaux et robustes comme des Hercules*) multiplied and prolonged the soft passes or *attouchemens* by which the magnetic influence was supposed to be communicated. The emotions once begun were soon transmitted to the rest, as we know one hysterical female, if affected, will induce an attack in all others similarly predisposed in the same apartment. In the midst of this strange scene entered Mesmer, clothed in a long flowing robe of lilac-coloured silk, richly embroidered with golden flowers, and holding in his hand a long white wand. Advancing with an air of authority and magic gravity, he seemed to govern the life and movements of the individuals in crises. Women panting were threatened with suffocation,—they must be unlaced; others tore the walls, or rolled themselves on the ground, with strong spasms in the

throat, and occasionally uttering loud shrieks,—the violence of the crises must be moderated. He approached, traced over their bodies certain lines with his wand; they became instantly calm, acknowledged his power, and felt streams of cold or burning vapours through their entire frames according to the direction in which he waved his hand.—*Foreign Quarterly Review on the Report of the French Royal Academy, and the Royal Academy of Medicine.*

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